

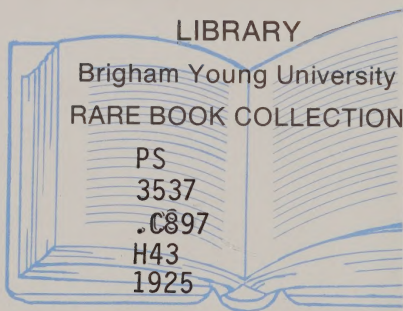
A COLLECTION OF
FIRST EDITIONS

brought together by

FRED A. AND FRANCES
ROSENSTOCK

acquired by the Library with the
assistance of the classes of 1942,
1948, 1951, 1960, and 1961.

THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH



BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



3 1197 22188 1250

To Clem Yoe:

A fine, fine friend
whose physical part I regret
that I have never met,
but with whose spiritual
body I often pal.

Sincerely,

Larry Scott

November, 1925

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

By

LEROY SCOTT

*Author of 'Mary Regan,' 'A Daughter of Two Worlds'
'Children of the Whirlwind,' etc.*



Boston and New York

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

The Riverside Press Cambridge

1925

COPYRIGHT, 1924 AND 1925, BY LEROY SCOTT

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Riverside Press

CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

THE LIBRARY
BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
PROVO, UTAH

TO
DAVID SCOTT

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE



CHAPTER I

KATIE O'DOONE was bending over the tub and with all the fierce energy of her scrawny eighty pounds was rubbing Mrs. Kirschbaum's white petticoat up and down the washboard, when a sharp groan came from behind her. She turned quickly and crossed to the rear of the little kitchen, where just behind the rusty stove stood a cot on which lay a wasted figure.

'Your side hurtin' you again, Ma?' Katie asked anxiously.

Mrs. O'Doone, who was only a little past thirty but to whose appearance poverty and long hours over the washboard had added another twenty years, controlled herself and smiled wanly up at her daughter.

'No, Katie dear. I'll be up and working to-morrow. I was just thinking about you — and perhaps the woman truant officer coming again — and I want you to get back to school.'

'I don't want to go back to school! Never!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'But, Katie, you're twelve and only in the fifth grade. I want you to have an education.'

'How's that g'ography, and 'rithmetic and grammar goin' to help me wash clothes?' demanded Katie, whose views were always to be practical although at this stage in her life they were extremely limited. 'I hate school! Education! Dad's got an education, and what good's it ever done him or done you? He's a bum, and a souse, and still has sixty days to serve on the Island for that last big drunk he was on! Dad and his education!'

Katie restrained her impulse to swear. Down in the street she swore as a matter of course, but never before her mother.

'You mustn't talk that way of your father, dear,' Mrs. O'Doone gently remonstrated. 'He's a gentleman, Katie, and he has a good heart. You know he's always been pleasant when at home, and he's never hit me.'

'I'd rather a man'd beat me up once in a while, if only once in a while he'd put something in my belly!' declared the aroused girl. 'If dad'd only got a job on the docks and brought his pay home, you'd never have had to work the way you always have! Dad pleasant? Pleasant in saloons, where they'd give him booze for his singin'! Why, you know the only real job he's had in years was bein' a singin' waiter in that café, and then he spent all he made on drink, and finally was fired because he kept so drunk he busted all the dishes. Dad educated?

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Dad pleasant? Well, if God ain't ever done nothin' else for me, I'll always thank God for not making me a man!

'Why, Katie, to talk that way about your own —' began Mrs. O'Doone.

'And what's more, Aunt Maggie ain't no better'n Dad,' the trembling little figure rushed on. 'I didn't tell you where I was when I was gone so long last night. I went over to Aunt Maggie's boat to see if I could borrow a few dollars from her. But she was sprawlin' over her cabin table, drunk as a stiff; I couldn't rouse her, and I couldn't find her money. Oh, Aunt Maggie's pleasant enough, too — when she's sober!'

Mrs. O'Doone attempted no defense of her sister-in-law. In fact, Katie's throbbing indictment of her aunt and her father had been very close to the hard truth. Terry O'Doone had been well on his way toward priesthood, when his irresponsible good fellowship and his liking for drink had caused him to be cast forth. Since then his tenor voice and his remarkable memory of the doleful ballads of the eighties and nineties, which since boyhood he had sung with romantic, heart-breaking sentiment — ballads of home and mother and dying child and the trustful young girl lured to the city only to be betrayed — had become the chief economic basis of such existence as he had achieved. Aunt Maggie had married an itinerant medium, who had survived matrimony but a year; whereupon she had taken

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

over the business and the shabby little houseboat, also the name 'Madame Minerva,' and had wandered leisurely up and down the Hudson, telling fortunes in her brief intervals of sobriety.

Katie's outburst had subsided. 'Guess I'd better get the rest of that wash out, Ma, while there's enough sun for the dryin',' she said, and moved back to the tub. Thereafter the Kirschbaums' clothes, which when delivered represented two most important dollars to Katie, went steadily up and down the board, were rinsed in water which Katie carried from the common tap in the hallway, were hung through the window upon the line which ran through a pulley attached to a mastlike pole in the back yard. That block of back yards, with its score of such masts and its hundreds of such ropes hung with a varicolored assortment of laundry, and with the murky, smelly East River swirling at its base, might have suggested to an unfamiliar and imaginative eye the beached wreck of some monstrous, nightmarish ship, its patched sails all in flapping tatters. But for Katie it had no such suggestion; it was just what she had always seen, and beyond which for herself she saw nothing.

When the last Kirschbaum piece was on the line, Katie glanced at the battered alarm clock on the table, poured carefully counted brown drops from a bottle into their only glass, added water, and crossed again to her mother. She did not know just what caused these spells from which her mother

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONÉ

suffered; she had heard something vague about 'heart.'

'Time for your medicine, Ma,' she said, slipping a thin arm beneath her mother's shoulders and helping her to a half-sitting posture.

Mrs. O'Doone gulped down the dark mixture, and sank gasping back on her pillow. She took Katie's free hand, and her toil-wasted face with its great eyes in their dark mines of sockets gazed with tremulous but fixed purpose up at her daughter.

'Katie,' she breathed, 'Katie —' Speaking her purpose was difficult.

'Yes, Ma?'

'Katie, I got something to tell you. I been holdin' something back from you. Hiding something from you. Money.'

'Money, Ma?'

'Money. A little bit whenever I could manage to save it — for 'most two years. It's — it's sewed up inside the mattress beneath my pillow. A hundred dollars. I — I intended it for my burying money.'

'Your buryin' money?' exclaimed Katie. She knew, chiefly by racial instinct, how sacredly important burying money was; how every decent person struggled through life with the ambition that at life's end the funeral was not to be 'on charity.' 'But, Ma, you're not goin' to need any buryin' money! You'll be as good as ever in a day or two — you see!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Mrs. O'Doone went on as though Katie had not spoken. 'Get the scissors, Katie, for I want to show you just where the money is — I want to get it out.'

Katie secured the scissors, and her mother, shifting her position and lifting pillow and sheet, pointed to a seam in the mattress. 'Rip there, Katie.' Katie obeyed, and from the wound in the mattress she drew a thick roll of bills, mostly of one-dollar denomination, their worn and crumpled condition a symbol of the drudgery by which they had been acquired.

'Why, Ma!' Katie gasped.

'I wanted you to know about that money, Katie,' Mrs. O'Doone went on, 'because — if — if anything happened to me, I wanted you to have it. I — I'm afraid your father won't be much help to you. Don't think of me at all — if — if anything happens. Remember, I want that money to go to you.'

'But, Ma, I'm not goin' to need it!' protested Katie.

'All the same, I want you to promise to keep that money for yourself.'

Katie realized that, for some obscure reason, that money troubled her mother; and chiefly to soothe her mother's worry, she gave her promise. For safety's sake she returned the roll of bills to its nest in the mattress and smoothed out the sheet.

'Remember, Katie, you've promised. And now I feel like a little nap. And you need a rest. Run down in the street and get a bit of air for an hour or two while the wash is drying. But first, kiss me.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie leaned down and thin lip pressed tight against thin lip.

'Now run along.' Mrs. O'Doone's eyelids closed drowsily, and her face turned toward the wall. 'Have a — good rest — dear.'

'Yes, Ma,' whispered Katie, and tiptoed out and gently closed the door. In the dark hallway she paused a moment to consider that undreamed-of fortune. A hundred dollars! Well, since her mother had given her that money, she knew how she'd spend it: on better food for her mother. Perhaps she'd even buy a whole chicken. Chicken soup ought to be good for her mother.

She began the four flights to the street. At the bottom of her first flight a door opened, and in the half-light a young woman with frowsy hair was revealed.

'That you, Katie?' she called. 'Want to earn a dime?'

'Yes,' Katie replied promptly and greedily; and then suspiciously. 'Earn it how?'

'Oh, I got such a headache, Katie, and I feel so rotten I can't walk. I need something to pick me up. Run down the corner to Dan's place, tell Dan it's for me, and fetch me a bottle of gin.'

'Is it walk you can't do, Nellie Harrigan!' Katie spat at the other. 'You can walk all right when you're walkin' the streets after the men, you damned street-walker! Go for the gin yourself, and while you're goin' go right on to hell!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

‘Why, you dirty little —’

But Katie was already headed downward and heard but half of Nellie Harrigan’s gasping obscenity. Had she heard it in full, it would have touched her not at all; for at this time in Katie’s life obscene language was just as natural as that back-yard’s shipwreck with its ballooning multicolored clothes for sails. There was little of life’s ugliness and vile-ness that Katie O’Doone, at twelve years, did not know and take as being just a natural everyday element in the make-up of the world.

Before she reached the street Katie was rather regretful of her hardness toward Nellie Harrigan. In her lazy way Nellie had often tried to be kind to her and her mother. If only Nellie didn’t hit the booze so hard, and sleep all day, and get her money off’n men! But Nellie was a bum and a loafer — that was what!

Katie came out on the stoop and sat down on the foot-hollowed top step which had been her favorite post for viewing her world for as long as she could remember. She could recall when Cherry Lane was a famed stronghold of the Irish; now it was almost entirely held by aliens — Italians and Jews. But for several minutes Katie gave no attention to the dirty, dark-skinned babies crawling about the sidewalk, to the children screaming and fighting and swearing and laughing in their play, to the plump mothers who were suckling their latest born in this open-air nursery which was Cherry Lane. It was

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

enough merely to sit there in the April sun and just rest. Her mother had been right: she *was* tired.

But presently that amazing vitality which was ever to be one of Katie's foremost qualities, coming from what source no one could guess, began to flow back into and recharge her, and she was on the point of rising to pick up a dead cat from the cobbled gutter and carry it around to East River for decent burial at sea, when a hand fell on her shoulder and a figure slipped down to a seat beside her. She looked quickly around. Her seat-mate was Pietro Romano, a well-dressed, lithe boy of fifteen or sixteen, innocence and frankness in his black eyes and in every smooth contour of his rarely beautiful Latin face.

'How you feeling, Katie,' he asked.

'I'd be feelin' a lot better if you'd take your dirty paws off'n me.' She pulled away from him. 'You know I don't like to be pawed over.'

Pietro removed his hands, which instead of being dirty were remarkably clean according to Cherry Lane standards.

'Listen, Katie,' he whispered. 'I been thinking a lot about a big idea. And about you. Want to make some money?'

'Sure.' Money always gripped Katie's interest; perhaps because she had seen so little money in her life. 'But how make it, Angel-Face? Some idea you thought out in reform school?'

'Aw, forget that, Katie!' Angel-Face Romano

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

was a fairly clever pickpocket who had been brought into the Children's Court several times. 'They'll never catch me again. This is something different.'

'It'll be swell to have you different from what you are, Angel-Face. Go on.'

'Listen, Katie. I'm going to get out of this life down here — get out among real people — and a person can only do that with money. I been thinking of you, Katie. Your hands. You naturally got the slimmest, quickest, cleverest pair of hands I know. And you learned a lot of smooth ways to use your hands from that medium aunt of yours the month she stayed with you. Why, you handle those card tricks so slick you fool even me! With us teamed up together it would be a cinch. Dress just as you are, and nobody'd ever suspect you. I'd spot the leathers and do the stalling, and you'd just have to slip your clever hand —'

Katie was suddenly on her feet, eyes blazing.

'Shut up on that, you dago crook, or you'll feel the nails of my clever hands all over your pretty face!'

'Not so loud, Katie! Not so loud!'

'Try to make a dip out of me, would you!' she stormed on. 'Just for your thinkin' I'd fall for such a crooked game I'm goin' to —'

Her right hand, five corded, vicious talons, shot out toward the handsome face. But Pietro had been on his guard and he seized and easily held the thin wrist; and then caught her other wrist and held her

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

struggling. Fights were common enough in Cherry Lane, particularly fights with Katie O'Doone as one of the participants, so this one drew small attention. However, just at this moment a spectacled boy of about Pietro's age stepped out through the door.

'Hello, people — what's the row about?'

'Hello, Morris,' Pietro answered quickly and easily. 'Katie's mad because I just asked her to sing.'

'That's a lie — Angel-Face did not!' she cried hotly.

'Well, if you didn't hear me before, then I'll ask you again now,' Pietro said pleasantly and with a little bow which even at that early time was indication of his inborn grace of body. 'Please sing for us, Katie. The crowd likes your songs, and I'll see if I can't get 'em to toss a few pennies and nickels into my cap. Morris will play for you.'

'Sure I'll play,' agreed Morris. 'Please go ahead and sing, Katie.'

For a moment she stood undecided, torn between rage and the desire for money, her eyes fixed on Morris Blum. He returned her gaze encouragingly. She rather liked Morris, even though he was a sheenie and altogether queer. Morris's father — 'Marriage Performer' read the sign that hung from his front window — had wanted Morris to study to be a rabbi. Morris had wanted to study music. A compromise had been reached whereby in return for Morris's beginning the preliminaries of his rab-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

binical studies, he was allowed to have music lessons. Fifty cents for a single music lesson!—that had always seemed insane extravagance to Katie. And that was not all of Morris's wastefulness. Why, he saved his money, and begged money, until he had fifty cents, or a dollar, or perhaps as much as all of a dollar and a half, and then went 'way up town and spent it on a ticket to a concert, or something he called the opera! He was certainly a fool with his money, was Morris Blum!

'Shall I get my violin, Katie?' Morris prompted her.

'All right,' she agreed.

Two minutes later Morris, making himself as inconspicuous as possible on a lower step, after the fashion of the under-stage orchestra of a theater, was playing a catchy medley of popular tunes then current, this to draw the crowd. Katie stood alone on her stage at the head of the stoop, waiting. Years afterward Katie O'Doone was to be generally conceded the most beautiful woman in New York, but there was little suggestion of the beauty and graciousness of the future in the slight figure in an oft-washed faded calico dress which she herself had made from a remnant bought for sixteen cents from a push-cart. To the unprophetic eye she was merely a thing of skin and bones and ligaments, with every joint knobbily obvious, and the lines of her face all running into privation's angles. The only hints of better things were in the cocky set of her small head,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

in her mouth too determined for childhood, in her plentitude of tousled black hair, and most of all in her large, alert, glowing black eyes — later to be known wherever print reached as 'the eyes of O'Doone.'

'Which one first, Katie?' Morris whispered when the crowd had gathered.

"Only a Bird," Katie whispered back.

She began to sing against the soft background of Morris's obligato. Her voice was slight and reedy; little of the lyric quality of her father's really good tenor was as yet evident as an inheritance. However, her voice carried, and had a weird, tricky quality that sufficed her needs. She knew practically no songs but the ones she had heard her father sing, and his favorites had remained the ballads he had heard sung in his boyhood. But whereas he had sung them with uttermost belief in their sentiment, singing from the heart and to the heart, and had drawn tears, Katie sang with exaggerated intensity, acting the drama and various characters of these narrative songs with doleful facial changes and with stiff, hingelike gestures which were not wholly lacking in grace. Intuitively she sensed the absurdity of the sentiment of those old ballads; and so, instead of tears, she brought snickers, then laughs, as she sang:

*'The ballroom was filled with fashion's throng,
It shone with a thousand lights,
And there was a woman who passed along,
The fairest of all the sights.*

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

*A girl to her lover then softly sighed,
"There's riches at her command."
"But she married for wealth, not for love," he cried,
"Though she lives in a mansion grand.*

*"She's only a bird in a gilded cage,
A beautiful sight to see.
You may think she's happy and free from care,
She's not, though she seems to be.
'Tis sad when you think of her wasted life,
For youth cannot mate with a-a-age,
And her beauty was so-o-old, for an old man's go-o-old,
She's a bu-u-urd in a gi-i-ilded ca-a-age!"*

She sang the next stanza and the chorus. There was applause, shouts of 'Give us another, Katie!' She whispered to Morris, 'Mother was a Lady,' then with thin arms jerking into angles of grief and, brokenly, in the manner of piteously helpless maidenhood, she sang:

*'Two drummers sat at dinner, in a grand hotel one day,
While dining they were chatting in a jolly sort of way,
And when a pretty waitress brought them a tray of food,
They spoke to her familiarly in a manner rather rude;
At first she did not notice them or make the least reply
But one remark was passed that brought the tear-drops to her eye,
And facing her tormentor, with cheeks now burning red,
She looked a perfect picture as appealingly she said:*

*"My mother was a lady, like yours you will allow,
And you may have a sister who needs protection now.
I've come to this great city, to find a brother dear,
And you wouldn't dare insult me, Si-i-r, if Ja-a-ack were o-o-on-lee
here!"*

She finished with the stanza which gave virtue its reward: in which the rude drummer, touched and

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

ashamed, besought the waitress to wed him. Again there were shouts for more, and again Katie gave Morris his music cue. This time her selection was one of the foremost of her father's old favorites: one that, the drunker he was, the more feeling he put into it — 'The Drunkard's Lone Child.'

*'Out in the gloomy night sadly I roam;
I have no mother, no friends and no home;
Nobody cares for me, no one would cry
Even if poor little Bessie should die —
Barefoot and weary I've wandered all day,
Asking for work, but I'm too small, they say.
On the damp ground I must now lay my head —
Father's a drunkard, and Mother is dead!*

*'Mother, oh, why did you leave me alone?
No one to love me, no friends and no home —
Dark is the night, and the storm rages wild:
God pity Bessie, the Drunkard's Lone Child!*

*'We were so happy till Father drank Rum —
Then all our sorrows and troubles begun:
Mother grew paler and weaker —'*

The song ended as sharply as if severed by a razor. Katie's roving eyes had just seen a woman in a trim tailored suit enter Cherry Lane and turn in her direction.

'My God, that damned truant officer again!' she gasped. 'Morris, I gotta beat it!' She whirled away, but paused to fling over her shoulder: 'And, Morris, if there's any dough in the bunch, grab it off for me!'

She raced wildly up the four flights, then quieted

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

down and very softly opened and closed the door in order not to disturb her mother's sleep. She was rapidly drawing through the window the Kirschbaums' dried wash, when, two minutes later, there was a rap upon the door. Katie knew well who stood without, and for a moment was gripped with fear; but before another knock had a chance to arouse her mother, she opened the door upon the truant officer. The latter was perhaps thirty and was new to her work which she took very seriously, her regard for the law regulating school attendance dominating all her present world.

Katie was the first to speak, and her voice was a whisper. 'Whatever you gotta say, Miss Kennedy, you say it low. Ma's asleep.'

Miss Kennedy entered and glanced at the quiet figure which lay on the cot, face toward the wall, one arm outside the shabby but clean comforter.

'Katie, you've been reported to me as being absent the last two weeks,' said Miss Kennedy with severity. 'Your record shows you've forever been dodging school and this is the fifth occasion I personally have had to look you up this year. What's your excuse this time?'

'My Ma's sick,' returned Katie with sullen defiance. 'I've had to take care of her and do the wash.'

'What's the matter with your mother?'

'Pain in her side.'

'I'll wait till she wakens. I want to have a real talk with her about your case.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie glowered with hostility at Miss Kennedy. She regarded her persecutor in the hated class of snooping coppers — and not even an Irish cop at that!

‘You needn’t wait. You ain’t going to worry my Ma with no talk. Get that! I just told you she was sick.’

‘I’ve done some nursing. I’ll have a look at your mother. Perhaps I can tell how sick she is.’

‘Say — don’t you dare touch my Ma!’

But Miss Kennedy moved to the bedside and took the exposed wrist, seeking the pulse. But even as she touched the flesh, her hand jerked away. She swiftly turned the face from the wall so that it gazed up at the scaly ceiling.

‘Katie!’ she gasped. ‘Katie!’

Katie was across the kitchen in two steps. At the sight of the face, waxlike in its pallor, its thin eyelids sealed, its mouth loosely agape, Katie dropped to her knees and caught the two cheeks in her hands. They were terrifyingly cold.

‘Ma!’ cried Katie wildly. ‘Ma! What’s the matter, Ma? What’s the matter?’

No answer came from the slack mouth.

‘Katie — she’s dead,’ breathed Miss Kennedy.

‘No, she ain’t!’ repudiated Katie. ‘I tell you she ain’t! Ma! What’s the matter, Ma?’ Then to Miss Kennedy: ‘Do something, you big stiff! Go for Ma’s doctor — he lives just across the street. Anybody’ll show you. Go!’

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Miss Kennedy hurried out, leaving Katie calling upon her mother. Almost at once Miss Kennedy returned with the doctor, and behind them came Morris Blum and Pietro Romano, and behind these two showed the face of Nellie Harrigan, looking strangely naked without its rouge. The doctor made a quick examination; his verdict agreed with Miss Kennedy's. Mrs. O'Doone's washing days were over. The cause had been her heart, and she had long known that she might go at any moment.

Katie threw herself sobbing over her mother's body, and Miss Kennedy and the doctor drew aside and whispered for several minutes. Then at the touch of a hand on her shoulder, Katie looked up. It was that meddling school copper again.

'What d'you want now?' demanded Katie.

Miss Kennedy tried to speak gently. 'We've been arranging things for you. Doctor Steele will at once get in touch with the charity authorities about your mother's burial.'

Katie came to her feet, great eyes blazing.

'You mean — a *charity funeral* for my Ma?'

'Why, what else —'

'You ain't goin' to do that to my Ma!' cried Katie. 'Not when she's got her own buryin' money saved up!' She slipped her hand beneath the dead woman's sheet, and drew forth her mother's legacy to her. 'See — there's her buryin' money! One hundred dollars! She's goin' to have a swell

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

funeral, Ma is! You just dare try to pull a charity funeral on my Ma! You just dare!'

Truant officer and doctor gazed at the tense little flame of a creature, holding out a great wad of soiled bills in a clawlike hand. Neither spoke.

'All you can do for my Ma,' Katie went on, 'is to send me up an undertaker who knows how to do a swell job. I guess you can do that, doctor.'

Dr. Steele accepted the commission and went out, and Pietro Romano and Nellie Harrigan faded away behind him. Ignoring Miss Kennedy and Morris Blum, Katie drew a chair beside the cot and gazed motionless upon the dead face. What seemed to Miss Kennedy a stoic calm replaced the child's former moods. In reality the soul of Katie was struck into brief death by this her first great sorrow.

An hour passed, then the undertaker came. It was characteristic of the Katie O'Doone of those early days that even in this the hour of her sorrow she haggled and bargained with the undertaker over every detail of her mother's funeral. She was spending a fortune, and she wanted full value in behalf of her mother for every penny spent. Everything was to be first class, and there was to be one carriage. When the arrangements were concluded, and the mortician's helpers were carrying Mrs. O'Doone's body out on a stretcher, Katie would have followed had she not been restrained by Miss Kennedy and the undertaker.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

After the door had closed, there was a stiff and heavy silence in the little room. Then the conscientious Miss Kennedy, whose school-law religion would not let itself be forgotten, said gravely, and tried to say kindly:

‘You realize, Katie, that this means that your old school-dodging is forever over?’

This brought Katie out of her trance. ‘What’s that?’ she asked sharply.

‘With your mother dead, and with your father not responsible, you are naturally now a ward of the State. I shall see that you are put in the proper institution, where you will have to go to school every day. You cannot possibly escape school there.’

For a moment Katie forgot her mother in her own undreamed-of catastrophe. School! She knew Miss Kennedy was speaking the exact truth, for she knew of many orphans and half-orphans who had been ‘sent away.’ She was so appalled that she could not speak, and Miss Kennedy interpreted her silence as acceptance of the situation.

‘And now, Katie,’ continued Miss Kennedy, ‘if you’ll get some things together I’ll take you along with me for the meantime.’

This was quite another matter, and Katie’s temper flared up again.

‘Along with you? Not on your life! I stay right here!’

‘But, Katie — you can’t stay here!’

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Why not? It's my own home, and the rent's paid. And I promised to deliver that wash to-morrow mornin'.'

'But you can't stay here alone!'

'Can't I? Well, I'm going to!'

'Please, lady,' put in Morris Blum, 'better let her stay. Katie'll be all right. And my ma'll look out for her.'

'I don't need your ma to look out for me, Morris Blum! And I don't need no one else! I can look out for myself. And now you get out of here, Morris!'

Morris quietly got out.

'You're next out the door, lady!'

'If I leave you here now, I'm coming to your mother's funeral and take you away then.'

'I can't keep no one from Ma's funeral. But just now I got work to do. So I ask you again, lady — please get to hell out of here!'

Nonplussed by this independence and brutal directness, Miss Kennedy gazed at the intense, determined little figure with the great glowing eyes. Though of fundamentally good intent, she could not understand Katie O'Doone — nor was she ever to be able fully to understand Katie. She lacked the capacity, the vision.

When at last Katie was alone, she locked the door and rebuilt the fire. Far into that night, without pause, she ironed away at the Kirschbaum clothes. She wanted the two dollars the delivery of the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

clothes represented. After all, there was one item she had overlooked in her bargaining with the undertaker. Flowers. She had to have those two dollars for flowers for her mother.

CHAPTER II

Two afternoons later the carriage supplied by the undertaker — Katie's expected splendid carriage with plumed black horses had turned out to be a creeping and decrepit taxicab — was nearing Cherry Lane on its return from Mrs. O'Doone's burial. In the taxicab, besides Katie, were Miss Kennedy and fat, kindly Mrs. Blum whose help, rendered in the form of warm food delivered by Morris, Katie had after all been accepting. Miss Kennedy was going to the Cherry Lane tenement to get Katie's few belongings, and thereafter conscientiously perform the other details of her personal and official duty.

On this homeward ride from the grave, Katie had been torn between grief and the growing immanence of her personal calamity as represented by Miss Kennedy. Miss Kennedy's words of two days earlier kept repeating their dark menace: 'An institution where you will have to go to school every day — where you cannot possibly escape school.' School — the tiring, wasteful folly of it, when one should be working!

She had been able to perceive only one possible escape from this black doom. She had pretended faintness, and had been moved from between Miss Kennedy and Mrs. Blum to an end of the seat where she might have air from the lowered window.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

She now leaned forward and thrust her head through the window, inhaling deeply, and one deft hand which Pietro Romano had praised so much slipped the elastic of her hat from beneath her chin, and the other deft hand twisted back the door handle until the bolt was free from its socket. As the cab lurched into Cherry Lane, the first deft hand sent the hat sailing backward.

'My hat — the wind's blown it off!' she cried, and before she could be touched she had leaped from the moving cab.

She landed as nimbly as an alley cat, turned and raced back and captured her black sailor purchased from a push-cart, which in those days was the smartest variety of shop Katie had ever patronized. A glance over her shoulder showed her the cab coming to a halt half a block distant, a bar of playing children having closed the street behind it like shifting quicksand. She darted away and around the next corner — around the next corner — through a dark underground passageway that connected two streets — continued her flight.

That was the last that Cherry Lane saw or heard of Katie O'Doone for four years.

When she leaped from the taxicab, Katie had three dollars in her pocket, which sum Morris Blum had belatedly turned in as the receipts of her interrupted street concert; he had not seen fit to tell Katie that all but twenty-five cents of this amount had been forced upon him by Nellie Harrigan.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Fifteen cents of her capital, and an hour and a half of time, brought Katie far uptown to the gangway of a shabby little houseboat against whose side was nailed the following canvas sign:

MADAME MINERVA, MEDIUM

KNOW THEN THYSELF

DOES HE LOVE YOU?

PAST AND FUTURE TOLD BY
PALMISTRY, CARDS, CRYSTAL, TRANCE

SPEAK WITH YOUR BELOVED DEAD!

Katie stepped down the gangplank, through an open door, and into a darkened room in which there were a few chairs, a table, and spooky draperies. This was Madame Minerva's 'audience chamber.' Katie crossed the room and entered a second one behind it. This was Madame Minerva's living-quarters, two bunks on one side, a small kitchen stove, a table in the middle, dirt and disorder everywhere.

Sitting at the table, her upper body loosely asprawl upon it, and a bottle and glass at her elbow, was the black-robed medium. Katie seized the shoulders and shook with all her strength, but could not shake this link between the living and the dead out of its alcoholic trance. She picked up the bottle and after emptying it into the sink returned it to where it had stood. Then she seized a bucket with a rope attached to its handle, stepped out the rear kitchen door, and reëntered with the pail brimming with two

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

gallons of the Hudson River. Grimly, with straining effort, she swung this up and dashed the water over the head and shoulders of the woman. Madame Minerva came up sputtering.

'Wha'ssis? Wha'ssis?' she demanded thickly.

'You stay awake there, Aunt Maggie, or you'll get another bucketful!' Katie threatened.

Madame Minerva blinked stupidly at the menacing little figure with the pail. Her face was puffy, her eyes rheumy and bloodshot. Once upon a time she had been counted handsome and she was now only in her early thirties, but no stranger would have guessed it.

Recognition presently came into her heavy eyes and she smiled. 'Why, it's Katie. Glad see you, Katie.'

'That's lucky for you!'

'Not feelin' well, Katie. Wait till have li'l' bracer.' She upturned the bottle, and stared in blank bewilderment at the empty glass. 'Tha's funny. Guess mus' 'a' drunk it all up. An' not 'nother drop on boat.' She sighed. 'How's y'r ma, Katie?'

'Buried. This afternoon.'

'Buried? An' I washn't even asked to funeral!' She began to weep in her aggrievement. 'An' y'r ma m' brother Terry's wife. Thash not ri', Katie. I'd come if you'd 'a' tol' me.'

If Miss Kennedy had been taken aback by Katie's brutal frankness, she should have seen and heard Katie now.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'You big drunken bum, you!' Katie lashed out at her aunt. 'A fine picture you'd 'a' made at Ma's funeral! — you big bottle o' rum with a dress around it!'

'Now, Katie — ' Madame Minerva began to protest.

'That's what you are, just a skin full of booze!' Katie snapped her off. 'And get this: I've come to live with you!'

'Glad have you, Katie.'

'And get this, too: you've gotta stop eatin' nothin' but rum, and you've gotta stick to your job!'

'But, Katie,' her aunt whimpered, sobered a bit by this prospect, 'with my weak cons'tution, I got have a little stimulant.'

'Aw, cut the bunk! The river full o' rum, that's your idea of a little stimulant! Now you wipe your face and go sleep off that jag!'

Staggeringly Madame Minerva obeyed, and soon was snoring heavily in the lower berth. Katie removed her hat, rolled up her sleeves, started a fire, and within four hours after her mother had been laid away Katie was on her knees beginning her fight against the dirt of the houseboat.

Thus was begun the strange relationship between Katie and her aunt, which was to continue for four years. They were years of moving up and down the Hudson, with the aid of a tow which was usually begged, but paid for when necessary; tying up for periods near the poorer quarters of the river towns,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

for the poor and ignorant were Madame Minerva's clients. This long odyssey had its many adventures, some as strange as those which Homer sang, but they have no proper place in this present record of Katie O'Doone. Katie herself, from the very beginning, regarded the houseboat and her experiences on it as merely a means for escaping school. For this purpose she could have selected nothing better than this wandering, uninspected life; during all the four years she did not once open a book.

However, omitting the adventures, a few general matters are worth setting down. After the interior of the boat had been cleaned, Katie seriously considered getting paint and freshening up the boat's exterior. But she learned that there was an unusual demand that season for houseboats to be used as summer homes, and she realized that if she were to make the exterior attractive, then offers might be made for the boat, her aunt might sell and go on an indefinite spree, and she would be left without a sanctuary. So as much as it went against her most driving instinct, she allowed the boat to remain outwardly a disreputable slattern. However, she could not be idle; and on days when there were no clients, or her Aunt Maggie was drunk — with all her efforts, Katie never did cure her aunt — she would venture into the towns and do a day's washing or scrubbing.

The most significant phase of this period was that, seeing everything and being imitative, Katie quickly

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

perceived the devices by which her aunt peered into the future, told the secrets of love, communed with the dead. Recognizing this interest, Madame Minerva began in her sober moments to initiate her niece, whom she really liked despite Katie's bullying, into the finer details of her mysteries; and noting the weird quality of the girl's voice, she taught Katie the tricks of ventriloquism. Thereafter, when Madame Minerva was in a trance and a sitter desired to speak with a departed soul, the thin spirit voice which crossed from the Great Beyond came from the mouth of the hidden Katie O'Doone.

And on the occasions when Madame Minerva was drunk in the kitchen, and there were clients, business did not suffer; for the thrifty Katie, her figure amplified by a pillow, assumed the black robes and veil and gave comfort to those who sought supernatural information. Not for a moment was Katie's conscience troubled by her frauds. This was work to be done, just as washing clothes, and she went ahead and did it.

Incidentally, during this period Katie regularly ate plenty of food for the first time in her life. And every warm day she was in the Hudson, flashing spray as she went through the water at the full speed of her crawl stroke, or practicing fancy dives from the roof of the houseboat. She watched the tricks of boys, caught them instantly; and presently at the jackknife or the swan dive, or for straightaway speed, she was the equal of any boy of her age along

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

the entire length of the Hudson. And so it was that real muscle developed, and no longer were her activities dependent upon sheer nervous energy.

And during this period Katie did two other things that were later to have their own significance. She could not help singing. It was in her blood; the inheritance from her father, that wayward Irish tenor who had been a singing waiter. So over and over, to no audience, she sang the only songs she knew — the sobbing songs of broken hearts she had learned from her father. Also, Katie danced. She could not help dancing. Aunt Maggie had a battered old phonograph, as disreputable and drunken-looking as herself and her boat, and she owned a few shabby, needle-worn records. To this slatternly music Katie, in her bare feet, on the old houseboat's after-deck, improvised the most fantastic and involved of dance patterns.

And during this long period there was hardly a day when Katie did not think of her mother. As a rule the wounds of death that strike into childhood and adolescence are quickly healed and soon forgotten. But with Kate it was otherwise. In some respects she was a grown woman, though only twelve, when her mother had died. So in addition to the love of a child for a mother, there was also the love of one woman for another adored and superior woman — and this was a love that was never to fade out of Katie's life.

During these four years Katie heard nothing from

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

or about her father; for all she knew, he might have been dead, although he remained a living and vivid boggy to her. Also during these four years a great war was being fought out, but of that booming destruction she heard nothing but the faintest echoes.

If Katie knew nothing else, she knew the school and working laws for children in the State of New York. She knew these laws through conflict with them. All the while she had been counting the time until she should be sixteen; to her the magic of sixteen was that it freed her to go to work — hard work, not the shiftlessness imposed by the houseboat life — with no snooping officer daring to interfere with her.

She came to the evening before her sixteenth birthday with everything thought out. Purposely she had let her Aunt Maggie drink herself into insensibility. Toward midnight she took the six flatirons from the stove and noiselessly dropped them overboard. Then she seated herself at the kitchen table, and with a stub of a pencil, with what remained to her of her fifth-grade education, she slowly and painfully scrawled the following note:

DERE ANT MAGGIE:

I can't bare it eni longer. I mene yur bein a drunken bum. It aint no life. Ime borrowen a row boat. Ime rowen out to the midul of the river. Ime tyen the flatirns to my ankuls and jumpen in. If you see Dad tell him how it hapened. Good by.

KATIE

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie read through her suicide note with approval. It had two good points: her watery death might frighten her Aunt Maggie into sobriety; and it also eliminated all her fear of her father, since if he heard anything about her through Aunt Maggie he would believe her deep in the silt of the Hudson.

She placed the note under a bottle of whiskey on the table, where it would be certain to be seen when her aunt emerged sufficiently from her stupor to feel the compelling desire of another drink. Then she slipped out and across the gangplank to where she had marked a riverman's boat. This she set adrift, to be found later as further evidence of her suicide; then hurried exultantly away through the gloomy outskirts of the little town.

At last she was free! There was none to interfere! Her world was now her own, and she could work as she pleased!

CHAPTER III

At ten o'clock the following morning, Katie was in New York City, with no baggage (she had taken none of her few belongings, for that might have destroyed the credibility of her suicide note), but with the small and secret savings of her houseboat life carefully sewed into the waistband of her skirt. To conceal her identity yet further, she had decided to change her name to Mary O'Brien; and she had decided that her future residence should be among the Irish of Hell's Kitchen.

The change of name Katie adhered to; but she felt the heart-tug of the region which had been her childhood's home, and after the fall of night made her feel more safe, she ventured again into Cherry Lane. She had been absent only four years, but instantly she was aware of the vast change those four years had wrought. When she had taken flight the Irish still had a fighting foothold; now the Jews and Italians filled Cherry Lane completely — even that Irish landmark, Dan's place, was gone.

She paused before her old tenement. Evidently the Blums still held their own, for against the lighted background of the front window showed the sign 'Marriage Performer.' Katie hesitated; then with sudden resolution she went in.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Mrs. Blum was at home, and instantly recognized Katie despite the changes of the years. She was more fat, more kindly than ever; and at once had Katie eating noodle soup and gefilte fish. From Mrs. Blum Katie got the neighborhood news. Her father had long ago appeared when his workhouse sentence was over, had wept copiously and berated himself with Celtic remorse upon learning of his wife's death and his daughter's disappearance, and then had been seen no more. Nellie Harrigan had vanished. Morris had been a grievous disappointment; instead of becoming a rabbi, he was now playing his violin in a motion-picture orchestra in Albany. His eyes had made him unfit for army service during the world war. Pietro Romano had been one of the first to enlist, and was still in France where he had made quite a record in action. Later Katie was to learn that had Pietro not acted promptly in the matter of enlistment and had he not had the luck to be promptly shipped overseas, the police would have seen that he served his country in a way which would not have allowed Pietro so much personal freedom, or such a chance at glory.

Mrs. Blum's most interesting news was that the one-room apartment Katie and her mother had occupied was at present without a tenant. That news was an inspiration. There was no place where her father would be less likely to stumble across her than in her old home — particularly since old friends were gone and Mrs. Blum had promised to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

help her maintain her new identity of Mary O'Brien. The following evening found Katie installed in the kitchen that was the only real home she had ever known, and it was quite like old times, for she was again doing the Kirschbaum wash.

Mrs. Kirschbaum, whose husband was a jeweler, had been glad to get Katie back, and praised her work among the rich Jews of Grand Street and East Broadway, and soon Katie's mast of that monstrous back-yard shipwreck was constantly fluttering with ever-changing sails. Katie had as much as she could do for sixteen hours a day, over the tub and the ironing-board, and what with bringing and returning the clothes, she had not been so near contentment since her mother's death. She had no time now for her front-stoop concerts; in fact, she never thought of them.

Back in this one room which for so long had been home to them both, Katie's mind inevitably dwelt often upon the mother who had shared it with her. And when she thought of her mother, her mind always held the conception of a superior being. Always Katie was wishing that her mother were back with her in this room, that she might give her wonderful mother better care than she had done before the undertaker had carried her away.

For six months Katie lived thus in her old surroundings, a happy hermit of toil. Then one morning she answered a knock, and in her door stood Miss Kennedy. That, too, was like old times.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Good-morning, Katie. For I believe Mary O'Brien is really my friend Katie O'Doone.'

'I wasn't never your friend!' Katie flared at her old persecutor. And then defiantly: 'You got no business botherin' me! There ain't a thing you can do to me. Think I don't know my rights? I'm sixteen and a half now, and you can't pull me back to no old school!'

Miss Kennedy had learned much of human nature during these last five years, especially the prideful human nature of the poor. So now her sense of duty did not prompt her to antagonize Katie. The wash-tub might have told her part of Katie's story, even if she had not already wheedled most of Katie's tale from Mrs. Blum. It is to Miss Kennedy's credit that she felt a sense of awe in the presence of that bel-ligerent, girlish figure, sleeves high-rolled, who had worked her hardest to escape all the things for which Miss Kennedy stood.

'I'm not trying to pull you back to school, Katie; I know I can't,' she said with a smile. 'Why, what a clean place you have! May I come in?'

'What d'you come for?' demanded the hostile Katie.

Miss Kennedy had learned one of the magic words that unlocked Katie's soul.

'Money.'

Katie regarded her suspiciously; then 'Come in,' she said abruptly. And when the other was seated in the room's one chair, she asked sarcastically:

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Money you've come for? You peddlin' oil stock now?'

Miss Kennedy retained her smile. 'It's you I want to get the money for, Katie. Listen carefully; I want you to think about something. As a washerwoman you're making about as much money as you'll ever make. The price for that kind of work is practically fixed. There's no future in such work. And it's wear-ing work. It wore your mother out when she was only thirty-three. Katie, I want you to make more money.'

'How?' was Katie's brief response.

'Perhaps you can't make more just now. But if you could get into a different kind of work, then after experience your pay would be increased, and then increased again.'

'What kind o' work?'

Miss Kennedy had not gone that far. 'May I think it over, and come again?'

'I'm willin' to listen,' Katie grudged her.

'Katie — do you mind telling me the reason you are calling yourself Mary O'Brien?'

Katie hesitated. She didn't like Miss Kennedy. But Miss Kennedy already knew all the facts behind her reason, so there would be no further harm in Miss Kennedy's knowing the reason itself.

'Because of my Dad. I want him to think me dead. He's no good. He made a mess of my Ma's life. If he was ever to come across me he might try to make a mess of my life. I ain't takin' no such chance. If he thinks I'm dead I'm safe.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'I understand, Katie.' Miss Kennedy slowly nodded. 'I'll come again as soon as I have a definite plan.'

Katie's was a difficult case, Miss Kennedy had to admit on further thought. Katie was limited to positions where industry and quickness of hand would be regarded as assets, and where her woeful lack of education would not count too heavily against her. Miss Kennedy had an inspiration: one of those five-and-ten-cent chain stores, where all the articles on a counter were of a single labeled price, where the customer was also the salesman, where all the girl had to do was to slip the purchase into a bag and accept the purchase price — that was the very thing!

There followed much argument with Katie. But a week later Katie — rather, Mary O'Brien — her trade of washerwoman behind her, and now in a black dress of cheap crêpe de chine with white collar and cuffs, was installed at a counter on which were glass beads, necklaces, and dress ornaments priced at ten cents, and another stage in the career of Katie O'Doone had been begun.

After her years of comparative solitude, Katie was at first bewildered by the crowds of women who pushed through the aisles, who pawed about her counter, replacing nothing. But soon she became accustomed to this human chaos, which in fact was disorder that was really a carefully calculated order upon which the proprietor's great fortune was established; and she instinctively began her valuable

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

study of human nature as seen from behind a five-and-ten-cent counter.

Next to her were the laces. That counter was in the custody of a serious, thin-haired blonde named Amy Miller. On Katie's second day in the store she and Amy lunched together in a cafeteria, and thereafter lunching together became an established custom. Amy was an orphan, almost nineteen, and had been in her second year at high school when the death of her father, who had owned a tiny periodical and stationery shop, had compelled her to go to work. She was really a very nice girl, put on no airs despite her advantages; and almost from the first the imitative Katie began unconsciously to reshape herself upon the lines of this superior model.

She had been at the bead counter for a week when Amy made a proposal. Amy's roommate had just left to be married; would Katie share her room and its rent? Katie considered this for a day; it seemed to her that all her roots were down in Cherry Lane; but in the end she uprooted herself, never to see Cherry Lane again except on occasional visits, and went to live with Amy Miller.

She gradually fell in love with Amy; she had never had a real girl friend before. But though she admired Amy, and her clothes, and the way she did her fluffy straw-colored hair, Katie was not dominated by her friend; no one was ever to dominate Katie, except as she gave domination of her own free will. Their ten-cent store was on Fifth Avenue in the very

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

center of the smart shopping district; and during part of their luncheon hour and after they had been let out for the day, they found pleasure, just as children find pleasure in fairy tales of princes and princesses, in walking along the Avenue and gazing into the show windows of the smart shops at the marvelous hats and gowns there displayed — their gaze critical but unenvious, for Katie at least accepted as her destiny that such hats and gowns were never to be for her.

On their evening walks they were often accompanied by a young man whom Amy introduced as Mr. James Harmon. Mr. Harmon was a shipping clerk in a big department store. Very early in their friendship Amy blushinglly confided her great secret: she and Jimmie were engaged, and were to be married as soon as Jimmie's wages permitted — and wasn't Jimmie simply grand? Katie agreed that Jimmie was grand; she really did like Jimmie.

And occasionally the trio became a quartette, for Morris Blum was now playing in a New York motion-picture theater. Morris was now twenty-one, still slight of build, rather awkward or at least embarrassed with everything except his violin. When with Katie he was ever stealing shy glances at her from his sensitive, spectacled eyes; but the meaning of those glances found no expression in his talk. However, Katie saw little of Morris, for her hours in the store and his in the theater allowed them little time in common.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Also Miss Kennedy occasionally called upon the two girls. Katie's hatred of her old persecutor had slowly melted away, and she had begun to have a real liking for the conscientious truant officer. However, Miss Kennedy was still afraid to say anything to Katie upon the subject of education.

These were halcyon days for Katie. Her only disaffection with life arose from an unspent surplus of energy. Eight hours in the store, doing her personal wash, making all her own hats and clothes and those of Amy — Amy did not have Katie's eye for effect nor her sure and clever hands — that was not enough for Katie O'Doone.

In the year and more that Katie spent behind her counter heaped with its glass jewels, Katie added a full inch to her height, added seven pounds to her weight, and developed that slender, lissom, yet graciously rounded figure that at a later period artists and theatrical managers were to rave about. At this time, however, Katie was as unconscious of all physical assets as a cradled child. Beauty of person or of possession had had no part in her life, except as something belonging to other people.

Then, suddenly, these halcyon days were ended. Late one wet afternoon in January, she attempted to dart across a street in the middle of a block — Katie was never one for patient waiting — when a furious blast assaulted her left ear. She halted, turned, for an instant stood paralyzed. Almost upon her was a splendid green roadster, a white-faced young woman

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

at the wheel, a white-faced young man beside her.

‘Lily — the emergency!’ shouted the young man.

There was a grinding of brakes. But in a split second, Katie was a huddled heap in the gutter, all consciousness gone from her.

CHAPTER IV

WHEN Katie emerged from her unconsciousness, she gazed around in amazement. The last thing she remembered was that big car swooping upon her, and now here she was in the cleanest bed she had ever lain in and in a white, airy room which was the cleanest she had ever seen, and by the window was a white-uniformed woman rocking and reading. Katie's left leg was an immovable weight with a core of throbbing pain, and her head ached dizzily. For several minutes she watched the woman in white, the while she strove to bridge this strange hiatus in her life.

'Hello there, you,' she said presently.

The nurse sprang up and came to her side. 'So you've gained your mind at last,' she said. 'I must report at once to Dr. Gregory. Please be quiet until I come back.'

She had been gone no more than a minute when she returned in the company of a white-jacketed young man. With an air of supernormal responsibility, which seems a characteristic of all young house-surgeons, he made his examination.

'She's doing well, Miss Gray, but she must be kept quiet,' he said to the nurse, and hurried out to his next case.

'Say, nurse, how long I been here?' asked Katie.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Two days. But you heard the doctor's orders. Try to sleep.'

Katie found it easy enough to slip back into unconsciousness. When she awoke again the headache was gone and she felt better. She felt still better after she had disposed of the bowl of chicken broth which the nurse promptly had ready for her.

'Say, how'd I get here and what happened to me?' the revitalized Katie demanded. 'And am I going to get well?'

Nurse Gray told her of her injuries: a leg broken just below the knee, and slight concussion of the brain. Yes, she was going to get well — in time. She had been run down by Miss Lilian Spencer, one of the richest and socially most prominent young women in New York.

'My bein' here must be costing me an awful lot of money,' said the ever-practical Katie. 'Believe me, I'm going to swat that Spencer lady good and plenty when I get out of here!'

'You won't have to wait till you get out,' smiled Nurse Gray. 'Miss Spencer brought you here, and she's been here two or three times every day to see you, and besides has telephoned two or three times every day.'

'You don't say?' said Katie suspiciously. The idea of rich young women of the upper world paying her any attention, no matter what the circumstances, did not seem at all credible to her. Rich young ladies didn't act that way.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

The nurse with professional briskness now took up a pad. 'Please give me your name and tell me about yourself. You see there was nothing on you to identify you.'

Katie silently gave thanks for this last fact. Being run down by a rich and swell young lady — why, that was the kind of thing that might have got into the newspapers, and somehow brought about the ever-dreaded reappearance of her father.

'Mary O'Brien,' replied Katie, and gave a garbled version of her life.

Nurse Gray had just recorded these invented details, when an orderly called her out. She was back in a minute.

'There's a gentleman to see you, Mary,' she announced. 'He's been here several times before.'

'Is he drunk?' Katie asked quickly, with a fresh fear of her father.

'Drunk?' Nurse Gray was puzzled by this strange question. 'Why, no. He's a gentleman who's been here several times, but he hasn't given his name or business.'

That would be Morris Blum, Katie decided, so she consented to see her caller. But the gentleman whom Nurse Gray ushered in was an utter stranger. He was full-bodied, youngish, confident and reassuring in manner, and was well-dressed, though to Katie with her worship of soap and water he gave out an instant impression of greasiness.

'My name's Levinsky,' he said at once, con-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

fidently taking a chair beside her bed as Nurse Gray withdrew. 'Awfully sorry about your smash-up. I'm your lawyer.'

'My lawyer!' exclaimed the astonished Katie.

'Yes, your lawyer,' the ambulance-chasing Mr. Levinsky went on with his ingratiating assurance. 'And I don't cost you a cent in advance — just one third of what I collect. And, believe me, Miss O'Brien' — he had secured her name from the nurse — 'we can collect a lot from Miss Spencer. I suggest that we claim damages in the amount of one hundred thousand dollars.'

'One hundred thousand dollars!' breathed Katie.

'Yes — and I think we can get it,' went on Mr. Levinsky rapidly. 'I've already examined all details of the case in your behalf. Miss Spencer is rich — orphan — has an old aunt living with her — social position the highest — spends money like water. She'll come across easy, without a trial — be afraid not to. That'll be over sixty-five thousand clear for you.'

Katie stared at his shiny, reassuring countenance. Sixty-five thousand dollars! The amount dazed her — only a short time since had she been telling fortunes at fifty cents apiece, and doing family washes at a dollar and a half a day. But before she could make response, footsteps sounded without, and two persons entered — a young man and a young woman, the young woman in the lead.

The latter instantly seized Katie's eyes: she wore

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

a short coat of fluffy Siberian squirrel and on her blonde head a darling little spring hat that a dozen days before had been born in Paris. Most obviously she was one of those divine creatures chosen by fate to ride up and down Fifth Avenue in splendid motor-cars. And she was beautiful! — though just now her face was pale and strained.

Impulsively she went to her knees at Katie's bedside and her words poured from her.

'I'm the person who almost killed you — I'm Lily Spencer. I was just telephoned that you were well enough to be seen and I came right over. It may seem a silly thing to you to say just now, but I've been almost sick ever since the accident, and I don't want ever to touch a wheel again. I can't tell you how sorry I am — but I want you to know that I want to do everything to try to make things right for you.'

In stupefied silence Katie gazed into the beautiful contrite face she had so recently declared she was going to swat; and for that matter, the smart friends of Lily Spencer would have been amazed to see the reckless, gay but proud 'Old Lil' in such a posture. This was not at all what Katie had expected. But Lawyer Levinsky coughed gently behind a pudgy hand, and spoke in Katie's stead.

'That makes the case much simpler, Miss Spencer, your saying straight out that you want to make things right. Miss O'Brien will settle the case for one hundred thousand dollars.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'One hundred thousand!' exclaimed Miss Spencer. 'Why, I judged from her clothes that she was a shop-girl, and I thought' — she turned to her companion — 'what do you think of their price, Billy?'

'Altogether too much — utterly absurd,' was the prompt reply.

Katie turned her eyes upon this 'Billy' person. She had a vague sense of having glimpsed his face before. Instantly she classified him as also being a swell: he was good-looking — wore fine clothes — was perhaps twenty-five. The beautiful lady might have been twenty-one or twenty-two.

'One hundred thousand dollars is our price,' Mr. Levinsky reiterated firmly.

'Why — why, you see, I have a certified check in my bag for ten thousand which I have been carrying around for two days. I thought — I thought —'

'One hundred thousand.' Mr. Levinsky interrupted her in his most polite, legal manner. 'Considering all the circumstances we feel sure such an amount will be awarded us by any court.'

'Court? Court?' repeated Miss Spencer. 'I don't want to go to court unless I'm forced to.' She turned distressed eyes of corn-flower blue upon Katie. 'This gentleman is your lawyer, is he, Miss O'Brien?'

Thus far Katie had not said a word since the sudden entrance of Miss Spencer. For a moment longer she continued to gaze silently into the face of this brilliant person from another world who had so

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

nearly killed her. Somehow, very strangely, she felt herself not hating this person at all.

'No, lady, this bird ain't my lawyer,' Katie said suddenly. 'He's just something the cat brought in. Never saw him till about a minute before you come.' She rolled her head on the pillow to face Mr. Levinsky. 'You knew the way in here, so you must know the way out. Take it.'

'But — but —' stammered Mr. Levinsky.

'Beat it, or I'll call the nurse!' Katie ordered.

Mr. Levinsky regarded her hesitantly, pleadingly.

'Beat it!' Katie again commanded.

Mr. Levinsky took his hat and withdrew from a case which for two days he had regarded as the beginning of his fortune. Miss Spencer glanced in questioning bewilderment at her companion, and at a glance from him she turned again to Katie, drawing the certified check from her bag.

'I presume, then, Miss O'Brien, that ten thousand dollars will be a satisfactory settlement?'

'No, lady.'

'No? Then how much more do you want?'

To Katie that ten thousand dollars was exactly the same as the hundred thousand the lawyer had proposed; both were amounts beyond her calculation. Katie was greedy in her younger years, but according to her code she was rigidly honest in all money matters.

'Lady,' she said finally, 'I never made more'n twelve dollars a week in my life. I ran into your

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

machine and you ran into me, so I guess it was as much my fault as it was yours. Perhaps it was more my fault, for I was jay walkin'. But it was me that was knocked out. Of course, you can't pay for the pain in my leg. But if you'll pay for my keep while I'm here, and pay for my keep until I'm strong enough to get me another job — why, I guess we'll call it square.'

'What!' cried the astounded Miss Spencer. 'Why, of course I'll pay more than that!'

'That's all it's worth,' said Katie, stubbornly yet respectfully. 'I aim to get everything that's comin' to me, and not to take anything that ain't comin' to me.'

'Did you ever hear anything like that in your life, Billy!' Miss Spencer breathed, her gaze still on Katie's face.

The young man was also gazing at Katie with quickened interest. Katie liked his eyes; they were gray and pleasant. Yes, he was certainly a swell.

'My name is Gordon, Miss O'Brien,' he said, introducing himself. 'I was with Miss Spencer when the car struck you.'

She remembered now where she had seen his face.

'Will you sign your proposition, Miss O'Brien?' he continued. 'I need only to change a few phrases in the paper I brought along.'

'Sure I'll sign it,' Katie said promptly.

'Sure you will not sign it!' declared Miss Spencer. Suddenly she smiled, and Katie thought her more brilliantly beautiful than before. 'You see, Miss

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

O'Brien, Billy here thinks he is a great financier, and he wants me to take his inspired financial advice. No one has ever taken his business advice before — that's why he's so eager now. But I'll see that he doesn't swindle you!' Then impulsively: 'What a dear you are! — and what wonderful hair you have!'

Katie blushed deeply. It was breath-taking to be called a 'dear' by this beautiful lady. She glanced down at her hair, which lay on either side of her in two thick, long, glossy braids. It really was rather nice hair. Until this moment Katie had hardly thought of her hair except as a nuisance which she had to comb.

Before leaving, Miss Spencer asked Katie if she wanted anything else. Nothing, said Katie, except that notice of her whereabouts be sent to Morris Blum, Amy Miller, and Miss Kennedy. In the days that followed, these three were frequently with her, for the hospital's rules about visiting days did not apply to private rooms. Morris brought his violin, and with his instrument muted to suit the hospital's requirements of quiet, he played her compositions of Chopin, with their fundamental spirit of brooding, beautiful melancholy — and these Katie did not greatly like, for Katie was never to like with blind and rapturous adoration that music of the past which is deified by the magic word 'classical,' as she was to like that new spirited music which was being created in her own day, and which

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

was as freshly distinctive of her own day as was she herself. Also Morris played brighter and livelier selections, and these she did like. Later on she was to learn that these were the compositions of Morris himself. But Morris came only three times; then the musical comedy in whose orchestra he was then playing ended its New York run, and Morris moved with it to Chicago.

When Amy came she gossiped of the store, and that was interesting, but she talked chiefly of Jimmie, their contemplated marriage, the dreamed-of little apartment uptown, herself its devoted mistress. The conscientious Miss Kennedy came regularly during her few spare hours; and since it was her understanding that the proper procedure in a hospital was to read aloud to the patients, she read Katie many excellent books—and during these readings Katie dozed pleasantly.

Miss Spencer came almost daily. During her third visit, she stated with her gay impulsive imperiousness, that she had had enough of this 'Missing' of each other and of Katie's addressing her as 'lady,' and she declared that thereafter she was going to call Katie 'Mary,' and Mary was to call her 'Lily.' Katie agreed to this proposal so far as it concerned her own name; but she begged off on the rest of it, consenting only to call the other 'Miss Spencer.' To Katie it seemed too great a familiarity to call by her first name this brilliant person from another sphere.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

On several occasions the aweing but pleasant young gentleman called 'Billy' came with Miss Spencer. On one day when he did not come, Katie asked with her inherent directness:

'What does he work at, that Mr. Gordon?'

'What does Billy Gordon work at?' Lily Spencer laughed as at a great joke. 'Why, my dear, Billy Gordon's most important occupation at present is trying to escape the oodles of conniving young females who are trying to trap him into marriage.'

Katie gazed at the other, her large eyes very grave. 'I don't see why he'd want to escape you, Miss Spencer. I'd think he'd want to marry you.'

'Billy Gordon marry me!' Again Lily Spencer laughed gleefully. 'What an idea! Why, Billy and I have known each other since we were kids. Always played together. We're great pals — but Billy doesn't have the marrying sort of love for me, and I don't have the marrying sort of love for Billy. Besides, we're related in some way — about thirty-second cousins.'

'But doesn't he really work?' pursued Katie. 'What does he do with his time?'

'Oh, he has an office and occasionally goes to it. He plays polo a lot, and tennis and golf. Then he goes to the opening of every new play and almost every night he's dancing. He's a hard-working play-boy, is Billy!'

And then she continued more soberly: 'You see, Billy was educated as an engineer. His father wanted

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

him to be able to handle any kind of work an engineer had to do.'

'I see!' exclaimed Katie, her eyes suddenly alight with enthusiasm and understanding. From her lowly houseboat Katie had gazed with tireless admiration at the stately river steamers that swept by and at the express trains of the New York Central that had thundered along the Hudson's bank between Albany and New York; and her worship had gone out to the men who had controlled the power of these speeding wonder machines. 'I think it's simply wonderful, to be able to run an engine! Of a train! Or a big boat!'

Lily Spencer smiled at her naïveté. 'Not that kind of an engineer, Mary. His father has big railroad interests, and he wanted Billy to succeed him in handling those interests. So he wanted Billy to have real practical knowledge of what he was handling. He wanted Billy to be able to handle the smallest kind of a practical job, or a proposition as big as building the Panama Canal.'

'Oh!' breathed Katie in disappointment. This did not sound nearly so splendid as being the engineer of the Empire State Express. 'Is he — is he buildin' any Panama Canals just now?'

'I'm afraid he isn't, Mary.'

'Why not?' pursued Katie, that young idolater of work. 'And if he's not buildin' Panama Canals, then what is he workin' at?'

'Not anything just now, except escaping the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

conniving young females. You see, Billy had just graduated from college when America got into the war. He served through the war, and after that he was a captain in the American forces that occupied Germany. He got his discharge only a few months ago, and like so many of the young men who were in the army, he's finding it hard to settle down to work and ordinary life. Besides, Billy's got quite a bit of money in his own name — ten million — perhaps twenty. He'll have more later. His father is Alexander Gordon — you know, the international banker.'

That sounded very impressive; but for some reason which she did not then analyze, Katie was not exactly satisfied with the stated reasons for Billy Gordon's not working.

The bones of clean youth knit quickly, and within three weeks of her entrance into the hospital, Katie was hobbling around on crutches, although her leg was still in a cast. Then one afternoon Lily Spencer breezed in with:

'I've got a job for you — with Madame Ravenal — but we'll talk of that to-morrow. Just now there's more pressing business. I'm going to take you home with me this afternoon. Got it all fixed up with the hospital authorities.'

'Me go home with you!' exclaimed Katie in stupefaction and sudden fear. She had no idea where Miss Spencer lived, but the place must be something terribly grand. 'Please, if it's the same

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

to you, I think — I think I'd rather stay here.'

When willful Lily Spencer made up her mind to do a thing, she usually found some way to do it. During the past weeks she had discovered Katie's reverent regard for economy.

'Listen, Mary — it's like this. I've a big house, and no one living in it but Aunt Angelica and myself, and Aunt Angelica is semi-paralyzed and hardly ever leaves her bed. The house is full of rooms going to waste. So why should I pay for you here when I can keep you at home and save the money?'

Katie had no answer to such sound financial reasoning. So she consented, stipulating that she would remain only until she was well enough to secure a job.

CHAPTER V

AN hour later Lily Spencer and the chauffeur helped Katie out of the limousine and to the door of a very large house just off Fifth Avenue in the East Seventies. The door was opened by a stiff elderly butler whom Lily Spencer addressed as 'James.' With James substituting for the chauffeur, Katie was slowly aided up two flights of stairs and into a large richly furnished room.

'I guess we both feel the need of a bracer, Mary,' said Lily Spencer, after Katie had been settled in an easy-chair. 'James, mix me the usual.'

They chatted until James returned carrying a tray on which were two glasses and a cocktail shaker. He was dismissed, and Lily decanted two yellow cocktails, one of which she offered to Katie.

'If it's the same to you, Miss Spencer, I'd rather not.'

'Don't you like cocktails, Mary?'

'I don't know. I never tasted one.'

Lily Spencer laughed gayly. 'What a little puritan I've found! I suppose you've never even seen a person take a drink, Mary?'

'That's about all I ever have seen, Miss Spencer. People drinkin'. Drink made a bum outa my father, and it made a bum outa my aunt. If I got started it

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

might make a bum outa me. I'm afraid of that, so I ain't goin' to get started.'

Lily Spencer stared. 'What a queer creature you are, Mary!' Then again she laughed her gay laugh. 'Well, I'm not afraid it's going to make a bum out of me — and your refusal increases the amount of my dividend!'

She drank her own cocktail, then the one intended for Katie, then poured the dividend from the shaker and downed that. The sight of this beautiful Miss Spencer bolting those three drinks went through Katie like a jagged knife. It didn't matter so much if an old rum-hound like Aunt Maggie —

'I'm going out to dinner to-night' — her hostess interrupted her reflection — 'and I've got to dude myself up a lot. But first I want to show you your quarters. Come on.'

It developed that this huge room, which Katie had judged must be the chief room in the house, was to be her own private sitting-room. Adjoining it was a bedroom almost as large, and beyond that a vast bathroom all porcelain and tile and nickel and towel-racks that Katie thought were cut-glass. But Katie managed to restrain her amazement until after Lily had hurried away to dress. Then she sank loosely back in her easy-chair. All this splendid place for her!... She thought of the one-room home she and her mother had had in Cherry Lane — of her bunk in Aunt Maggie's houseboat — of the dark small room she and Amy had shared, cook-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

ing over a gas-jet. . . . It couldn't be possible that she was really here — and yet here she really was!

She was still marveling when James entered with her dinner on a tray. A sense of degradation in his every stiff movement, he silently arranged the dinner upon an invalid's table drawn before her, and had stalked halfway back to the door when Katie spoke sharply:

'James!'

He turned about.

'Say, you old neckful of starch! You come back here and get wised up to something! Come on — don't stand there like your feet growed right outa the floor!'

He hesitated, then returned to her side. Her black eyes blazed up at him.

'Now get this, jazbo! You're sore at me, and don't like waitin' on me, and are only doin' it because you got orders from your boss. That goes double! I don't like bein' waited on by you! I don't belong here. I'd rather be down in the kitchen, waitin' on myself. I'm only here because Miss Spencer made me come. I'm tryin' to please her. So you're not doin' me a favor — not one damned bit! You hang on to that idea — if you got any brains to hang it on!'

The butler's expressionless face fell agape at this tirade, then turned scarlet. Then it performed the seemingly impossible; it smiled.

'Fine for you, Miss. I like them with spirit.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

It'll be a pleasure to wait on you — the same as on my own daughter, which I never had one.'

That was one quality of Katie O'Doone which rarely failed her: the instinct to say or do the right thing in the right manner at the right time. James told in the servants' hall of Katie's outburst; and all the while she remained in Lily Spencer's house Lily Spencer's servants were devoted to her.

Katie slept but little that night. She was too bewildered by the luxurious comfortableness of everything to be able to feel any comfort. She would have slept better in her bunk in Aunt Maggie's houseboat. And then she kept thinking and worrying about the job of which she was to learn on the morrow. Madame Ravenal! She knew well enough who Madame Ravenal was — just about the smartest of the smart modistes along Fifth Avenue. Madame Ravenal's was the window against which, on their window-shopping expeditions, she and Amy had most frequently pressed their noses in breathless admiration of the marvels within.

The morrow was even worse than Katie's fear, for Madame Ravenal came in person to inspect her. 'Don't you worry, Mary — I spend a fortune on Ravenal every year — she's got to take you,' Lily Spencer whispered to her a moment before the great modiste came in. Madame Ravenal quite filled Katie's ideal of what a ruler of women's dress should be: imposing of figure, a very handsome and haughty fifty, with a folding lorgnette which she

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

used in the manner of a scepter to emphasize her imperial mandates.

'Stand up, child,' she ordered, and Katie arose upon her crutches; and there followed the first meeting between Ravenal and the girl who had 'the eyes of O'Doone.' Ravenal made her turn around; quizzed her closely; then spoke to Lily Spencer as though Katie were not present.

'Good hair. Otherwise quite impossible. The idea, Miss Spencer, of your wanting me to take on a girl from a ten-cent counter! No education whatever. And such English! Did you ever hear such English? If my customers should hear her talk, they'd walk out of my place laughing. Oh, of course I'll take her, since you ask it — but I can't give her a good-paying place, or any place where she's likely to be heard. Perhaps I can use her as a stock-girl. Send her along when her leg is well, but tell her to keep her mouth shut.'

Madame Ravenal swept out, Lily following her.

Her mouth shut! Never before had Katie O'Doone been so humiliated — she who had been so proud, so self-contained and certain of herself, so independent of the opinions of others. She sat for an hour, crushed, her rare fighting spirit all dead within her. No education! Her English such as would forever force her to remain dumb, in the background, and in an inferior position compelled to accept inferior pay!

Not until that day had Katie realized the con-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

crete relation between an education and a job. Presently out of this death life began to struggle forth, ideas came faintly into birth; and later she said to Lily Spencer, who was trying to comfort her without knowing why she was troubled:

'I'd — I'd like to see Miss Kennedy. Do you think you could get her to come?'

Lily sent a telegram, and that very evening Miss Kennedy called. With all her militant pride, Katie was never one to spare herself, and with her native directness she wasted not a word.

'Miss Kennedy, you were right about an education and I was wrong,' she said desperately. 'I want an education! How can I get it?'

'Why, Katie, what's happened?'

Katie told of the scene with Madame Ravenal, ending with: 'So you see I gotta have an education. How am I to get it?'

'That will be easy. As soon as you're well enough to start work, you can start going to night school.'

'But I can't wait! I wanta start now!'

Miss Kennedy gazed for a moment at the tense face, with its great eyes filled with agonizing appeal. She was deeply moved: what a different Katie this was from the Katie who had defied her on the day of her mother's death!

'I'll speak to Miss Spencer,' Miss Kennedy said gently. 'I think it can be arranged.'

It was arranged. There appeared a tutor, a conscientious young man who was paying his own way

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

toward his degree of doctor of philosophy. He was filled with information which he was eager to impart; but what made him count most in Katie's career was his well-modulated voice and his really excellent speech. It was under him that Katie began to acquire that knowledge of English, with its finer *nuances*, which was later to make her flexible diction a charm to every ear.

She studied as she had washed clothes. It was hard, incredibly hard, but mere difficulties had never halted Katie. She drove straight onward; what she once learned, she did not have to learn again.

She had been at her studies for a week when she had her first social caller. He was Mr. Gordon. Having an idle fragment of an afternoon, that unsettled young war veteran had bethought himself of dropping in on Lily Spencer's protégée whom he had not seen since she had left the hospital. He had considered her rather an interesting character — an amusing little gamin.

Katie was frankly glad to see him, and without attempting to rise from her invalid's chair she gave him a firm hand. He was very considerably surprised at the little gamin, and most agreeably surprised: in her green smock, a loan from Lily Spencer, her thick dark hair a frame for her vivid face with its great eager eyes, she was indeed a striking picture. And books! Books in her lap, on the floor, on the table beside her!

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Why all the books?' he pleasantly inquired after greetings were over and he was seated.

'I'm studying to be able to get a better job.' Even a week had improved her English; her final 'g's' were beginning to stick in the places intended for them.

She looked just a child to him, her hair down, half lost in the great chair, and he playfully addressed her in the tone he would have used to a child. 'Remember, you're an invalid, Miss O'Brien. I hope you're not overdoing things.'

'I'm not. The books are hard for me, but that's all my fault.'

'How much do you study each day? Two or three hours?'

'I get up at five, and except for dressing or eating, I study until nine or ten, when I go to bed.'

'What?' he cried. 'Sixteen hours of work?'

'I've always worked sixteen hours a day,' she said simply.

He stared at her. Her black eyes met his gray ones with the friendly calm of one who is merely stating an ordinary fact.

'You've always done that?' he demanded incredulously. He leaned forward. 'Tell me about yourself.'

Very simply, without shame as to her beginnings, Katie told him of Cherry Lane, disguising localities and names—of her houseboat life, her acting as a medium—her career as a washerwoman—her

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

career as a sales-girl — her promised job at Madame Ravenal's, her present studying to fit herself for a place which would permit her to open her mouth.

He drew a deep breath when she had finished. His eyes were shining.

'Mary O'Brien, I want to tell you this: You're the pluckiest person I've ever known!'

'That wasn't pluck,' she corrected him. 'All that was just something I thought I had to do.'

Then she smiled, and her smile held a hint of friendly mischief. 'Now tell me about yourself. How is *your* great work getting on?'

'My great work?' His face was blank. 'I don't understand.'

'Miss Spencer told me. She said your great work was dodging all the pretty girls who were trying to catch you.'

'Oh, that!' Despite his superiority over this little imp, he blushed furiously. 'Lily talks an awful lot of rot!'

'When a girl does catch you, I hope she'll be the girl you want.' She now became apologetically earnest. 'And — and I hope you don't mind my saying it — but it seems to me that you'd want to go to work. Real work.'

Again he stared into her great, serious eyes. She certainly was a queer piece — this girl from the washtub, the houseboat, the ten-cent counter — with her gospel of work! He decided to treat her lightly, teasingly.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Perhaps you'll tell me the secret, hidden from mortal view, of learning how to work. You've been a medium, you told me.'

'The only way I know to learn to work is just to start in working.'

'Then perhaps you'll show me that way?'

'Why, of course I will. Some day. That is, if I can.'

Suddenly the absurdity of this last proposition struck Katie's sense of humor, and she burst into soft, whimsical laughter. He was caught by its infection. They sat laughing at each other in momentary equality: Katie of the slums and the houseboat, and young Mr. Gordon of Park Avenue, Tuxedo, and Newport — neither of them having the slightest premonition that it was to be no laughing matter at all.

CHAPTER VI

KATIE sat thinking with idle books in her lap for half an hour after young Mr. William Gordon had gone. He certainly was a grand gentleman, and his manners were simply grand, and it was grand the way his brownish hair tried to twist into curls. Yes, he'd certainly marry a grand lady some day — if only he didn't let the wrong girl grab him off. Miss Spencer was just the right girl for him; but then Miss Spencer had said they did not care for each other with the marrying kind of love. That was too bad.

And it was altogether too bad about Mr. Gordon's not working. They had spoken further about his work, and Katie had been very serious. But she had been aware that, after his first surprise at her attitude, he had been merely amused at her earnestness. She had known that he had led her on merely to hear her talk, but that knowledge had not checked her purposeful talking. He was altogether too nice a person not to work. He must sometimes be terribly bored, perhaps without knowing what really bored him. She remembered how she was bored, even irritated, when there was no work for her to do.

She was turning the problem of Mr. William Gordon over and over in her mind, when Lily Spencer's

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

voice came to her from the hallway through her open door.

'I want you to meet her, Peter. I think she'll interest you.'

'But if she's sick, Lily, perhaps she'd rather not see strangers.'

There was a vaguely familiar quality to that second voice, like a faint echo from some half-forgotten chamber of the distant past. Instantly and instinctively Katie dropped her head deep into her shoulder, and her hair was a thick veil over her features. There was a knock, to which she made no answer; then Lily Spencer led her caller into the room.

'She's asleep, Peter,' whispered Lily. 'She must be tired, or I'd waken her for you.'

'Oh, I'll meet your little friend some other time,' Peter said easily. 'Is she pretty?'

'Not very. But she may be. She's never had the time and the chance to make herself look pretty. I told you she came from behind a ten-cent counter.'

'Anyhow, she's got most of the hair in the world. Except yours, Lily.'

There was further whispering. Behind her screen of hair, Katie saw everything. In her utter astonishment she for a moment almost lost possession of herself; but she managed to retain control of her pose as a wearied and sleeping invalid. Through her lashes she saw a smartly dressed, slender, graceful, handsome young man in his early twenties. He

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

would have been classed as a rare beauty had he been a girl, yet there was nothing effeminate in his looks or bearing. Katie knew this handsome young man at once, despite the six years which had passed since she had last seen him. He was 'Angel-Face' Pietro Romano, who had once tried to entice her clever fingers into his then profession of picking pockets.

But what was Pietro doing in this splendid house, with his polished manners, and on a basis of apparent equality with Lily Spencer?

The pair tiptoed out, careful not to waken her. Katie continued to wonder at this amazing situation. Out of her bewildering thoughts there finally emerged this clear and appalling possibility as concerned herself: she had tried to bury herself, to disconnect herself entirely from the dangers of her past. For the first time since she was twelve this thought came to her and frightened her: were Pietro, her father, all the other figures and elements of her discarded past, about to emerge and connect themselves with her present and future?

She was still wondering over this menacing possibility when, an hour later, Lily came in to see her. Lily had been going out almost every night in unending pursuit of pleasure, and she had fallen into the habit of dropping in regularly on Katie for a few minutes before her nightly vanishment into the golden realm of gayety of which Katie had only the vaguest of dreams. This night the brilliant Lily

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

wore an amazing gown, clinging, flimsy, whose material was beyond Katie's experience, with matching bracelets and necklace and gleaming fillet which were equally beyond all Katie's knowledge. Katie unconsciously jotted down in her unforgetting memory every detail of that costume, but she gave no sign of making this record. However, she must have given some sign of her disapproval when James brought in the usual cocktail shaker, and Lily drank in swift procession four cocktails.

'Mary, don't look at me like a maiden aunt who has survived from the Mayflower,' Lily protested. 'I'm going out to-night to an old dinner that would seem dead even to a mummy, and I've got to have a little something to start me off and keep me alive through all those black centuries. After the dinner, though, I'm going to flit ahead two or three thousand years. To a dance that will be a dance!'

The meticulously honest Katie had hardly heard Lily's bantering protest.

'Miss Spencer, I pretended a lie when you were in here a while ago with that gentleman. I wasn't asleep. I was watching you both.'

'You little fraud! But don't you think Peter Romain is handsome?'

'He is,' admitted Katie. 'Just who is he?'

'He is the son of a noble Italian family. Impoverished, of course. His parents died when he was young, and he came to America to join his uncle,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

who, however, died just after he landed. His estate gone, fine family — the old story, you know.'

Katie made no comment on this. Less than two months before she had seen old Pietro Romano and his fat wife in the basement cobbler's shop in Cherry Lane — the place reeking with the odor of garlic which rolled forward, like some poison gas, from the one room behind the little shop which served as kitchen and sleeping apartment. How she did hate garlic! And now Pietro, born in that same basement, amid the fumes of garlic, was a foreign nobleman of ancient lineage!

'How did you come to know him?' Katie asked.

'He was in Billy Gordon's company during the war. He was clever, and Billy noticed him. He became a sergeant and would have had his lieutenant's commission if the war had lasted a month longer. As things happened, he's been about Billy's best friend since demobilization. So of course I got to know him.'

That would be just Pietro's procedure, Katie reflected: to connect himself with the most influential man in his world, and then adroitly make the most of the connection.

'What does Mr. Romain do for a living?' she pursued.

'What a question-mark you are to-night, Mary!' laughed the other. 'But I don't blame you for being interested. Peter Romain interests almost every person. That is, if the person is a woman. Peter has

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

no money, as I told you, and while he's waiting for the kind of chance he wants, he's earning a living with his feet.'

'Dancing?' Katie suddenly recalled that in the old Cherry Lane days Pietro had been even more clever at dancing than at picking pockets. In fact, as children, she and Pietro had often danced together on the pavements to the itinerant barrel-organs, and she had liked the rhythmic motion even though she had not liked Pietro's arm around her waist.

'Dancing, yes,' replied Lily. 'He's at the Alessandro Club. Not part of the cabaret there — though he's altogether too good for it. He's — you know — the best dancing partner on the floor, and I think in the city, for the woman who wants a man who knows how to make her dance a little better than her best.'

'And these women, they pay him?' asked the Katie who could never rid herself of the motivation of dollars and cents.

'Of course. Not always directly, though; you know he might regard that as an insult. But presents. Sometimes the presents are money, of course. And invitations; social affairs, you know. Why —' with a sudden burst of confidence — 'he'd make the best professional ballroom dancer of the present day if he cared to take it up. And what's more, Miss Mary of the Question-Mark, he thinks I'm a very unusual dancer, if you please. In fact he thinks so

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

much of me as a dancer, that, if it were not for my money, he says we'd make a team that would set the fashion in dances. So there! I'm going to dance with him at the Alessandro to-night, after my undertakers' dinner-party is buried. So there again!

'Excuse me, Miss Spencer, 'but I wish you wouldn't trust him too much.

'Why not? Surely you cannot know anything about him?'

Again Katie's dread of her father silenced her. If she spoke the truth, then all might somehow come out and her terrible father might come back into her life.

'I had a good look at his face, Miss Spencer. I think he's bad at bottom.' Again she had to fall back upon her lame explanation. 'You know I was a medium once, and I learned to size up people quick.'

'Oh, bother you and your being a medium — you dear little fool!'

With a scintillant smile Lily was off. Katie thought long upon what she had learned. So Pietro Romano, with his smooth ways, was accepted by these grand persons, had almost become one of them! There was nothing Pietro would not attempt against those people, provided he saw a definite chance of emerging safely. With her clear vision, which perceived no distinctions when it came to honesty, Katie saw the handsome Pietro, with a flashy outer regard for propriety, living upon the rich women of the city,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

even as poor Nellie Harrigan had in other days gained her sustenance from the reeling men-dregs who had momentarily fallen under the sway of her painted fascination.

She was afraid for Miss Spencer. But then Miss Spencer, with her money and commanding social position, was out of danger's way. She was more afraid for herself. She did not want to meet Peter Romain — never! — and yet, while she remained in this house where Peter was a welcome guest, there was always the risk of such a catastrophe.

Amidst all her thinking, this thought stood out with stark clarity: Peter was being received in this world, if not as an equal, then certainly almost as an equal. She was being accepted merely as an unfortunate daughter of the poor, who had captured a young woman's vagrant fancy. She had no illusions concerning her position: she was poor, illiterate, nobody. But she wasn't a crook, nor a fake. She had put fakery behind her when it had become no longer an economic necessity to strap a pillow against her stomach and don the mediumistic robes and mannerisms of her drunken Aunt Maggie. Whatever she got in the future, she was going to earn.

A few days later, Billy Gordon called again and chatted with Katie for an hour, an hour of good-humored give-and-take. Then Lily came in and did her chaffing best to egg these two on at each other.

'Two calls within a week, Mary!' Lily accused

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

smilingly when he had gone. 'This begins to look serious!'

'You shouldn't say that even in fun, Miss. He comes because, being in the car when I was hurt, he's a bit sorry for me, the same as you are. And then he hasn't anything else to do.'

'Oh, Billy Gordon wouldn't call and stay so long out of any mere sense of compelling duty! And, begging your pardon, my dear — you do not make the most unenchanted figure of unpleasant duty.'

Katie did not reply to this raillery. She was silent a moment; then she asked a question that had been often in her head these last few days.

'Did Mr. Gordon's family help make him what he is? What's his family like?'

According to what Lily told her, his mother had died when he was ten. She had been a rarely beautiful daughter of one of New York's most aristocratic families, and her husband had loved her with passionate devotion. After her death he had centered his entire love upon his son. The world might say that he was cold, that his soul was merely a banking mechanism, but there was no doubting his love for his son. The son returned the love. The pair were devoted: the son was proud of his father; the father's greatest hopes were fixed upon the son. The two men lived together in the Gordon mansion on Park Avenue.

There was one aspect of this storied loss of the elder Gordon which was almost beyond Katie's

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

understanding. This was Mr. Gordon's pride of race, a kind of dynastic pride. According to Lily, Mr. Gordon saw as the chief object of Billy's marriage the continuation of the honored breed of the Gordons. Mr. Gordon's hobby — it was almost a lesser religion — was blooded cattle: at his million-dollar stock-farm his pedigreed cows lived as in ladies' boudoirs, his bulls were valeted as though heirs to thrones; and this same belief in blood, in pedigreed strain, he held applicable to human mating. His wife had been of the purest strain. He expected the wife of his son to be of no less distinguished pedigree.

Although most of this meant little to Katie at the time, yet out of it all she developed a definite picture of Mr. Gordon long before she ever saw him. He was steely cold and harshly proud — a calculating, dominating man, accustomed ever to having his own way and ruthlessly bending all others to his desire. She did not like this grim despot, even though he did after his own fashion love his son; she began to have a vague feeling that this masterful father might be partly responsible for the son's disinclination to work.

In the days that followed, Katie was possessed by the desire of getting out of the house of Lily Spencer, where she did not belong, and away from the danger represented by Peter Romain. She studied her books, and the use of her tongue, as relentlessly as before — sixteen hours a day. Also, although Lily

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

never surmised it, she instinctively studied Lily's method of speech, her gestures, her polished but wholly natural manners, how she wore her splendid clothes; and thereby Katie secured at no price the fragment of a finishing-school education that had cost some one else a fortune.

She was happy when the time came when she was well enough to begin work in her insignificant position at Madame Ravenal's. Lily tried to induce her to continue living at the Spencer house. But this Katie refused; she wanted to be back among her own kind, and she had arranged to resume living with Amy Miller, her old friend of the ten-cent counter. Also Lily tried to induce her to accept numerous gorgeous gowns which would never be worn again. These were refused, not because Katie did not want them, but because she considered they did not befit her. Of all that was offered, she accepted only an old simple black *crêpe-de-chine* gown, and even this she toned down to the obscurity which she believed proper to the station of a stock-girl who was forbidden speech. And in this second-hand, made-over dress, on a Monday morning in March, Katie O'Doone, alias Mary O'Brien, appeared with fearful but eager heart in the establishment of Madame Ravenal to begin what she then believed to be her humble duties and experiences.

CHAPTER VII

As a stock-girl at 'Madame Ravenal, Importer,' Katie obeyed the injunction concerning her mouth, and kept it shut. But her eyes and ears she kept open.

She was awkward at first, but this she quickly overcame. Her work was chiefly to bring numbered models called for by salesladies, and then carefully to return them to the long closets protected by rolling doors whence she had brought the treasures. She loved the feel of the marvelous fabrics, their graceful cut. It was sheer joy to be handling real articles, after the cheap imitations of the ten-cent counter. But in the beginning she was appalled at the prices, which the customers took as a matter of course. She had known that Lily Spencer's gowns were expensive, but her wildest guess had not approached the truth. One could hardly buy the cheapest gown at Madame Ravenal's for less than two hundred dollars, and from that the prices ranged upward into the thousands.

Madame Ravenal's was in truth what it claimed to be, the smartest shop of its kind in the city. It occupied four floors on Fifth Avenue, the fourth floor being given over to the busy alteration department. Madame Ravenal was herself rarely seen by her customers. She was represented on the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

selling floors by a Miss Grennell, a most adroit and capable forelady. Madame Ravenal was understood to be always in Paris or London, or scouring Europe in search of nobility's priceless laces and ornaments which the war had released upon the market.

Madame Ravenal, indeed, did do all these things; but most of her days she spent behind an awesome door on the second floor. Few save Miss Grennell ever entered that office. Herein Madame Ravenal — who had been a Miss Gregory from Kansas until her marriage in Paris to a popular violinist, long since deceased, had given her her French name and the beginning of her prestige — inspected her importations, designed her own creations, peered into the future of style, watched over her own finances, and studied the amount of credit she could safely extend each of her customers. Success had come to Madame Ravenal with the expenditure of much hard work and real cleverness, and now that she had success she worked all the harder to keep it.

Katie, always keeping herself in the background, watched the smart ladies of society and the beauties and the high-salaried stars of the stage select their garments, watched how they walked, watched and heard every item of their deportment and speech. Katie did not then know it, but she was really going to school to the most highly finished women in New York. What Katie saw and heard naturally became a part of her, though by a strange instinct her psy-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

chic body threw off as effluvia all that was spurious or inferior.

Katie had been at Madame Ravenal's less than a month when, on hurrying home from her work, she was hailed from the curb. A roadster was standing there, and stepping from it was that very good-looking Mr. Gordon, and he was smiling his most pleasant smile.

'Miss O'Brien — I've been hoping you'd let me call you Mary,' he said. 'Won't you please help out a lonesome man, who hasn't a friend in town who cares for him, and have a bit of dinner and a bit of chat with him to-night?'

'Thank you, Mr. Gordon,' said Katie. 'I'm very sorry, but I've got to work to-night.'

'Work!' exclaimed young Billy Gordon. He stared at her. 'Why, child — you've already done your day's work!'

'But not my night's work. Miss Kennedy — she's an old friend, you know — has helped me get into night school and I have classes to-night.'

'To-morrow night then? By the way' — thinking that her plain dress might be the cause of her refusal — 'you needn't bother about clothes. We'll go to some quiet little place to-morrow night where people don't pay any attention to dressing for dinner.'

'I'm not worried about clothes for dinner, though this really is my best dress. You see I have school to-morrow night.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Then some other night, Mary? Just name the night.'

She smiled and shook her head. 'I'm afraid it can't be any night, Mr. Gordon. The evenings I'm not at night school, I must stay at home and study.'

'Great God!' he exclaimed. 'No fun at all! What's the big idea?'

Her answer was characteristically direct. 'I believe I've already told you the idea. I'm very ignorant, Mr. Gordon, and if I'm going to work my way up into a better job I've got to have an education. That's what I'm trying to get — an education.'

He stared at her in bewilderment. Then a somewhat indignant suspicion flared into his eyes.

'See here, Mary, is all your talk just a stall? Is your real idea that I'm one of these rich movie villains who is up to his regular movie-business of luring a poor young working-girl to her ruin?'

She laughed in his face. 'Of course you're not! But if you were, I could take care of myself, and don't you ever forget it! I'm just busy. That's all there is to it. Good-afternoon.'

With a smile she was gone. Mr. William Gordon, late captain in the A.E.F., gazed after her slim, supple figure with more surprise than he had experienced in many months. There were dozens of young women in New York, many with their millions, who would have jumped at the chance to arrange a pleasant evening in his company. But this shopgirl making fifteen dollars a week — Lily had

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

told him of Katie's wages — and wearing a second-hand dress made over by herself — Lily had also told him of the episode of the gowns — this fifteen-dollar shopgirl had turned him down cold! In his exasperation he sprang into his car and shot away. He wouldn't give that girl another chance to insult him!

But Katie had told him the strict truth. She was studying hard, every evening and all day of a Sunday, and this unaccustomed studying, for all her quickness of mind, was very hard, indeed. She barely had time for a word with Morris Blum when he called, and she allowed him to gaze at her in silent adoration while she went on with her tasks. Also she worked hard in the shop; she studied the stock as she studied her books. Her willingness, her deftness, her growing knowledge presently made her a favorite among those very superior persons, the salesladies. She was their first choice among the stock-girls: she remembered instructions, and her replies were limited to 'Yes' and 'No' or to swift and silent obedience.

One day Madame Ravenal, while on her way to that august sanctuary wherein she had her being, paused beside Katie.

'You there — I've forgotten your name.'

'Mary O'Brien,' supplied Katie.

'You're turning out much better than I thought you would. Keep it up.'

Katie remained obediently dumb, and the great

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Madame Ravenal passed on into her holy of holies. But that day was the happiest day Katie had had in months. She wasn't so bad after all! She was really earning her great weekly salary of fifteen dollars!

Part of Katie's duties consisted in carrying garments from the sales-floors up to the busy alteration department where the fitters' changes were made. Naturally she developed a speaking acquaintance with Mrs. Roth, the worried and hurried chief of alterations.

Late one afternoon, when Katie brought up, with pins marking its alterations, a dinner gown that had been promised for delivery the following morning to a customer so important that she could not be denied, Mrs. Roth was in despair.

'I can't possibly do that thing!' she cried. 'My girls already have more promised work than they can ever possibly do!'

Katie took all her courage in her hands. 'Please, Mrs. Roth,' she stammered, 'if you'll let me try — I'll do it to-night.'

'You!' exclaimed Mrs. Roth, staring at this black-garbed stock-girl. 'That's an imported gown, and its price is five hundred dollars. What on earth can you know about altering and fitting gowns?'

'Perhaps not very much,' admitted Katie very humbly. 'But I've always made my own clothes.'

Mrs. Roth continued to stare at the girl. Then she threw up hands of resignation.

'Go ahead. You can't do worse than spoil the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

sale, and that'll be spoiled anyway if the dress is not ready!'

So all that night Katie joyously ripped and sewed, following the indicated alterations of lines. She adored the touch of the soft silk, she loved the idea of refashioning this rare garment to satisfy and adorn the woman who was to wear it. The dress was delivered the following morning, its purchaser made no complaint; therefore Mrs. Roth was vastly relieved. But Katie's real praise came after she had remodeled, during overtime, two other evening gowns.

'Child, you are a born copyist!' exclaimed the tired Mrs. Roth. 'I don't know how you got the knack of it, but it just seems that once you see anything you can make its exact duplicate!'

That was the real beginning of Katie's friendship with Mrs. Roth. From Mrs. Roth she learned many secrets of Madame Ravenal's business, and she began to dream of the fortunate days when she might be something more than a stock-girl and perhaps be earning as much as twenty dollars a week. Madame Ravenal's shop, by reputation, dealt only in imported garments. Further, the shop was so exclusive that it was reputed to carry only a single outer-garment of any style; therefore, a customer had the assurance that she was not going to have the mortification of unexpectedly meeting upon another woman the twin sister of her own gown; and for such insurance of raiment Madame Ravenal charged

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

about two hundred per cent above an excellent profit.

In practice, as Katie soon learned, Madame Ravenal had at least two copies made up in her workroom of each of her most expensive importations. Since the material, the workmanship, the style, were the equal of the original, Katie could see no wrong in this secret business practice; particularly since the home-made importation, costing perhaps thirty or fifty or a hundred dollars, sold at the same five hundred or thousand dollars as the gown really brought from Paris. Madame Ravenal was very careful about the geography of her sales. The originals were sold to her New York trade; one duplicate might be sold to the South or Middle West, and the other to the Pacific Coast. Thus there was little danger of the triplets ever meeting, and of the ladies in them being horrified by their unexpected kinship.

CHAPTER VIII

WHILE Katie thus watched, picking up every point, the months rolled onward to June. The trade was dead, except for a woman running into town to fill some gap in her summer wardrobe. Every day was lived by Katie in expectation that Miss Grennell would give her notice to leave. But no such notice was delivered to her.

Katie had not seen that Mr. Gordon since she refused his invitation to dinner; and then early one afternoon he came in the shop behind Lily Spencer and a handsome dark girl whose every line of face and figure was patrician. The three had lunched together, were bound for the races, but the dark girl had insisted on stepping into Madame Ravenal's for a minute to pick up a rag of an evening gown.

The saleslady who waited on them called Katie to her assistance. Both Lily and Mr. Gordon spoke to Katie, and, when Katie went for the first model ordered by the saleslady, the fun-loving and friendly Lily followed her.

'What do you think of the girl with us, Mary?' Lily whispered.

'She looks handsome, and she looks rich,' replied Katie.

'She's both, all right. Her name is Madelaine Forsythe. She has oodles of the real old-family stuff

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

in her, and at that she thinks she has a lot more than she has. Remember, Mary, what I once told you about the life-work of Billy Gordon?

'You mean his dodging girls who are trying to marry him?'

'Just that. And of the whole lot Madelaine Forsythe has the best chance. She has the most determination, though she hides it. I'm betting she'll finally land Billy. Thought your knowing about her would make these few minutes in your day of toil a bit more interesting.' And with a soft, mischievous chuckle Lily strolled away

When Katie returned with the lilac gown she had been sent for, Miss Forsythe gave it a glance, rejected it, and turned a cool gaze of inspection upon Katie. Eyes could not have been more impersonal, more superior.

'I've just been told that you are that O'Brien girl Miss Spencer ran down, took care of, and then placed here.'

'Yes, Miss Forsythe,' said Katie.

'I hope you properly appreciate what Miss Spencer has done for you?'

'I do, Miss Forsythe.'

For a moment longer the gazes of the two held. Katie's mediumistic ability was not wholly fraudulent; to an extent she could really read the hidden natures of people. In this graceful product of long-inherited wealth, beneath all that was lovely to the eye, she sensed a young woman who was clever,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

subtly indirect in her methods, patient, utterly selfish in her dominant desires, and perhaps unscrupulous and swift in action when she saw these desires endangered. But Katie was not medium enough then to foresee, any more than Madelaine Forsythe, that she was facing for the first time the young woman who, of all women, was to play the most vital part in the later drama of her life.

Just now all that Katie felt was an instinctive antagonism. Behind the well-bred impersonality of Miss Forsythe's gaze Katie read arrogance and contemptuous indifference that were an insult to her pride. She didn't mind Miss Spencer being dictatorial and a bit condescending at times, for Miss Spencer more than equalized these trifles by her very genuine *camaraderie* — though Katie did wish Miss Spencer would not spend her whole time in gadding about and she wished Miss Spencer did not drink such a lot of hard liquor.

Miss Forsythe made the rounds of the cases in which the evening gowns were hung, the saleslady guiding her, and Katie following to be of service on command. Miss Forsythe walked with a slightly swaggering but fashionable gait, she had comments to make, mostly faults, on a dozen gowns, and she interrupted her own talk several times to call across the room to Mr. Gordon such bits as, 'Oh, Billy, I'm sorry to keep you waiting so long, but such a wretched assortment I've never seen!' Three times she made occasion, with her cool superiority, to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

rebuke Katie for her awkwardness, and Katie's original antagonism sprouted into even more vigorous anger, although she managed to keep the quiet tongue that Madame Ravenal had imposed upon her.

At length a dinner gown of brilliant emerald chiffon was selected, and ordered to be delivered the next morning. As Miss Forsythe was leaving, she had a final corrective word for Katie:

'Miss Spencer has been more than generous to you. Try to cure your clumsiness if you expect to hold a position such as this.'

That instant Katie's anger was transformed into hatred. All the Irish in her became a wilder Irish. She wanted to take Miss Madelaine Forsythe apart, into the smallest possible pieces. It so chanced that no other customers were on the floor, and Katie gave way to a mad, irresistible impulse. With the elegance of stride of one who knows she is a great young lady, her chin held high, Katie walked to the middle of the room, asked an imaginary saleslady to be shown evening gowns, and then in swaggering self-assurance she followed the non-existent lady to the cases. The doors of these she rolled back, she made depreciative remarks about the gowns in precise finishing-school English, she carried on a conversation, mostly criticism, with the saleslady, she rebuked the awkward Mary O'Brien, she interpolated many remarks beginning, 'Oh, Billy.' She was Miss Madelaine Forsythe to the life, with just the amount

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

of exaggeration to make an impersonation humorously satiric. And although she was doing a caricature, there was real grace behind all her movements — the grace that was hers by birth, and which she had developed by her years of swimming and fancy diving from the roof of Aunt Maggie's houseboat. The stock-girls laughed outright; even the salesladies smiled.

Then an ominous voice sounded from the rear.

'You, there — what are you doing?

Katie whirled about, and her vibrant anger was instantly replaced by a disastrous fear which reduced her being to flaccidity. In the doorway of the sacred office stood the imposing figure of Madame Ravenal.

'You will come in here,' commanded Madame Ravenal amid the sudden death of the gayety.

Katie walked obediently to her doom. In another minute, for the first time, she was in the sacred office. Madame Ravenal was seated behind a great desk with a top of plate-glass, and Katie stood before it awaiting the sentence of death.

'I heard and saw all you said and did,' Madame Ravenal stated promptly. 'What do you mean by making sport of my customers?'

'I — I got mad at Miss Forsythe — that's all,' came from Katie's dry throat

She knew she was going to be discharged, and she didn't want to go. From her lowly place she had for months looked up at Madame Ravenal with awed

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

respect; in Madame Ravenal she had sensed a hard-working woman who knew her business.

'When I saw you at Miss Spencer's house several months ago, you talked English right out of the gutter,' continued the brusque Madame Ravenal. 'A few minutes ago I heard you talking as good English as Miss Forsythe. How did that come about?'

Haltingly Katie told of the tutor, of the night school, of the long Sundays spent in study.

'You mean that all the months you've been with me, you've not taken an hour of your time for fun?' demanded Madame Ravenal. 'What was the idea of all this studying?'

'When you first saw me you told me I'd have to keep dumb if I was to get a job with you. That made me see I had to have an education if I ever wanted a better job.'

Madame Ravenal gazed at Katie for a silent moment.

'How old are you?'

'Just past nineteen.'

'A little over five feet four in height, weigh around one hundred and twenty. That about right?'

'Yes, Madame Ravenal,' said the bewildered Katie.

'Ever have any physical training?'

Katie said she had not. But on further questioning she remembered that she had danced with the other children on the sidewalks to the music of the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

hurdy-gurdies that came into Cherry Lane; and she told of her strenuous swimming and her efforts to perfect her fancy diving during the years while on the roaming houseboat.

'But diving off a houseboat doesn't explain how you learned to walk as I just saw you walk. How did you learn to walk?'

'By watching the ladies who come into your shop. The best of the ladies, I mean.'

Madame Ravenal touched an ivory-topped button in a row under her right hand. In a few moments Miss Grennell, the forelady, entered.

'Miss Grennell, bring me the gown Miss Forsythe just bought,' ordered Madame Ravenal.

In a few more moments Miss Grennell was back with the evening gown of emerald chiffon.

'How's your underwear, girl?' demanded Madame Ravenal. 'Fairly clean, I hope.'

For the first time during this interview Katie, that devotee of soap and water, felt a flare of courage, almost of anger.

'I put it on fresh every morning,' she answered. 'I wash it myself.'

'All right. Miss Grennell, help her get into that gown. Arrange that mop of black hair rather low on her neck so that its mass has the effect of being behind her left ear. Also get the emerald comb from the safe and fix it just over the ear.'

Madame Ravenal had spoken with the crispness of a general who has sure knowledge of every detail,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

and like such a general she was obeyed. In remarkably few minutes the transformation had been completed.

'Now, girl,' continued Madame Ravenal, 'walk back and forth in front of my desk. Try to walk as if you're a lady and you belong inside those clothes, and cut out any of your damned tricky steps.'

Dazedly Katie promenaded to and fro until stopped by Madame Ravenal.

'That's enough, child. Now take a look at yourself in the glass across there.'

Katie stepped into the wide embrace of the three full-length mirrors. She almost cried aloud in her surprise, and a tingle sang ecstatically through her. She could hardly believe the thing she saw, for this was the first time Katie O'Doone even seriously considered that she might be good-looking.

'That will do,' the voice of Madame Ravenal interrupted the entranced and entrancing vision. 'Get back into your own clothes and run along.'

When Katie had closed the door upon her back, Madame Ravenal said to her forelady: 'Well, Gennie, what do you think of the girl?'

'She may prove rather unusual, I think.'

'Rather unusual — oh, hell, Gennie!' exploded Madame Ravenal, who could talk like a very real general when in the mood. 'Why don't you come out into the open and say we've been a pair of poor damned blind boobs! That girl has real class — though Heaven alone knows where she got it. She's

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

had an almost ideal physical training to develop grace, though she doesn't guess that either. And almost the best part of her is that she doesn't yet know how good she is. Lord, if it wouldn't have been bad for business I wish that snippety Miss Forsythe could have seen the monkey that tenement girl made of her — Forsythe had it coming to her! Grennie, after this you're to use the O'Brien girl as a model to show off our niftiest evening gowns, whenever you need a model.'

That was almost breaking a precedent, or rather renewing an old one; for Madame Ravenal, as had the very best of the other shops, had practically discontinued the former practice of using models as an aid in selling gowns. That practice they had left with the second- and third-class shops who had seized upon it.

'Very well,' agreed Miss Grennell.

'And, Grennie — I've just been scheming out our exhibit of advance fall models we're going to display in the Fashion Show I've promised to give as a part of the Milk Fund Fair late in August out at Huntington and Southampton. I think I have something lined up which will make that Long Island summer crowd think we're better than ever before. And if that little O'Brien girl develops properly, she's going to have on her back the snappiest gowns I show. That's all, Grennie. Send that girl back in to me.'

A minute later, when Katie was again before the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

great glass-topped desk, she was still as dismayed and bewildered as before.

‘How much are you being paid, O’Brien?’ asked Madame Ravenal.

‘What Miss Grennell started me on — fifteen dollars a week.’

‘Beginning with last Monday your pay will be twenty-five a week. It may soon be more if you do good work. Miss Grennell will tell you what to do.’

‘What!’ gasped the astounded Katie. ‘Why, Madame Ravenal —’

Then quite the most unexpected thing happened to Katie that had happened to her in all her nineteen years. The stiff, imposing visage of Madame Ravenal relaxed into a smile, she stood up, slipped an arm around Katie and kissed Katie on the forehead.

‘You’re a dear, my child, and I like you — and you’ll find old Ravenal is not so bad. Don’t let yourself become a little idiot, and don’t let any one make you a little idiot — and, who knows, perhaps some day Ravenal may be glad to be making your gowns. Now get out of here. Get to hell out of here. Can’t you see I’m busy?’

Katie got out somehow, with a vague memory that Madame Ravenal had snuffled and used handkerchief on both nose and eyes. Katie could not understand anything, but she was living in a wild chaos of happiness and her soul was trying to trill on high C.

CHAPTER IX

DURING the weeks that followed, Katie, accustomed all her life to roughest cotton, as a matter of business wore silk next to her skin, and joyed in its caressing softness. And half a dozen or a dozen times a day she was bedecked in the finest of Madame Ravenal's importations for evening wear, and was ever seeing herself in new effects. And more consciously than before she studied the graceful and gracious technique of being a lady; for, as she then saw it, imitating a lady meant the dollars and cents of her future. The pretense of being a lady, that was her job.

And though a job, Katie loved it. She loved these beautiful gowns, even though they were not hers and such things were never to be hers. Perhaps it was because she loved them so much, tried to put vitality into her brief wearing of them, that she helped sell so many of them even though this was the off season.

These were the happiest weeks to date of Katie O'Doone's life. Oftentimes she looked back upon Cherry Lane and all her past, and wished that her mother were alive to share some of her present luxury. Also she frequently thought of her Aunt Maggie, so often too drunk to conduct her séances, and of the old slattern female hobo of a houseboat. And often she thought, with fear, of her father; not

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

so much fear — rather a vast relief that she had escaped him if he were still living. She could not possibly have safer, more unsuspected sanctuary against this old, terrible man — she always thought of him as old — than in her princess's clothes here in the shop of Madame Ravenal.

Katie's most frequent and dominating thoughts that touched upon the past were of course of her idolized and idealized mother. If only her wonderful mother were now alive, to share in this magically improved fortune! There was no finer luck beyond her present luck. There simply could be no fortune higher than her own great fortune with Madame Ravenal. It wasn't possible. Better luck simply did not happen.

And because she could not divide her wonderful fortune with her wonderful mother, Katie on many a night quietly cried herself to sleep.

Good-hearted Amy Miller, still at the lace counter — through Katie's prosperity the two were now sharing a one-room apartment, with kitchenette and bath — was worried over the danger that might be lying in wait for the now more prosperous Katie from plausible but unscrupulous men. A pretty, unprotected girl, poor, but with enough money for a little finery, was always in great danger: this for Amy had been the invariable lesson of the movies. With clumsy solicitude she tried to caution Katie; but Katie laughed at her warnings, and called her a darling old prude. Nonetheless Amy and her patient

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Jimmie Harmon, who also distrusted handsome men, often privately discussed this danger; they decided that they would stand by, and rescue Katie in her hour of need.

At the Fashion Shows at Huntington and Southampton, Katie was easily the outstanding mannequin in Madame Ravenal's choice exhibit. Katie herself realized that she wore clothes with a better effect than the women of these fashionable summer colonies. But that knowledge did not turn her head. They were real; she was just a pretense, wearing clothes as a business — that made a wide world of difference.

Madame Ravenal was more appreciative. Back in the office of the shop, Madame Ravenal raised her ten dollars a week, and for the second time kissed her.

'You've done me proud!' the modiste exclaimed. 'I want you to promise me right now you'll never let anybody buy you away from me without first giving me a chance to meet or better the price.'

'Why, I'd never think of leaving you!'

'That's a relief. Another thing: I don't want you to make any kind of business decision without your first consulting me. Will you promise?'

'Of course I promise, Madame Ravenal!'

The very idea of her leaving Madame Ravenal, entering another business, when she was now to get thirty-five dollars! The incredible sum of thirty-five dollars!

The fall and early winter trade now began, and

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie was very busy changing from one flimsy masterpiece of current fashion into another. During the passing months she had several times accidentally met Billy Gordon, and on these occasions he had again asked her to have dinner with him and she had each time refused. She met him in October, and the usual invitation was once more forthcoming. She felt she had earned one evening off; she really liked Billy Gordon despite the damning fact that he still was just a loafer, and so she accepted the invitation for a night during the following week.

The evening came. Since he could not very well be received in the one room occupied by Katie and Amy, he had been instructed to push a button in the entry and wait. This he did, and in hardly more than a minute Katie had joined him.

'My God!' he exclaimed, staring at her.

'Do you like the way I look?' she asked.

'I should say I do! Who wouldn't?'

'I tried to please you,' she smiled. 'The firm of Ravenal always tries to please.'

She was in a green gown that was a brilliant sister of the one she had tried on on that memorable day in Madame Ravenal's office. Her idea had been an unthinking but thrilling impulse: since she had made her first success in that green chiffon, an association of ideas had prompted her to make her first appearance at a dinner party in that same successful gown of green. She had bought the material and had made the gown after hours up in Mrs. Roth's work-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

room, and had done likewise with her long green cloak.

'But — but, I say,' stammered Billy Gordon in misery, 'I can't take you out in clothes like those.'

'Why not?' she demanded sharply.

'Why — why, isn't the reason perfectly obvious?'

'Why not?' she repeated.

There was nothing for it but to answer her question with the ugly truth. He was a very miserable young man indeed.

'Don't you see that if you wear those things, people will say that — that I'm paying for your clothes? You understand what people will mean by that?'

He had expected her to be shocked, to cringe away in shame. He had his surprise. She laughed.

'Why, you poor stupid man, you're as silly as Amy! That same old stuff of the poor working-girl lured away by the splendid gifts of the handsome villain! Aren't you alive to the fact that plenty of working-girls can pay for their own things? Now come on — let's go!'

'All the same,' he persisted, 'it might be better if you changed into something more simple.'

'You listen to me,' she snapped, suddenly a stiff figure with blazing eyes. 'I made these clothes especially to go with you to-night. Either I go in these clothes, or I don't go at all! Now the next move is strictly your move.'

He yielded.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

His car took them down to Rogano's where he had reserved a table. Rogano's was south of Washington Square, but not properly of Greenwich Village. It was an establishment of some note, with a strangely triple personality: here congregated quiet people in quiet garb, here bohemians with money to spend and ideas to expound with voice and gesticulations, and here smart people from uptown — for these smart people, ever on the lookout for something different, had discovered that Rogano's served good food and had a piquancy all its own. It had been because of the quiet element of its character that Billy Gordon had picked Rogano's out; he had thought Katie would feel at home in the simple costume he had expected her to wear.

Rogano himself, plump, urbane, received them and escorted them to their table with its upholstered seat against a wall. The dinner had been already ordered, and Katie had no more than taken in the mixed crowd, the small glistening dancing-floor and the tiny stage at one end whereon sat the orchestra, when her gaze was caught by three new figures entering the door. That instant Katie was filled with panic. The three were Lily Spencer, Madelaine Forsythe, with Peter Romain as their escort. The trio recognized Billy Gordon, and crossed toward him. Katie realized that her long-escaped meeting with Peter was a bit of drama belonging to the very next moment.

Katie was introduced to Madelaine Forsythe and

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Peter Romain as 'Miss O'Brien.' Peter bowed formally, his handsome face a mask of a stranger's courtesy. The drama did not have its first explosion from Peter Romain; the first explosion had quite another source. Katie noted that Madelaine Forsythe's eyes were glittering, then noted that Madelaine wore the very evening gown of emerald chiffon which had been sold her from Madame Ravenal's shop a few months before — the gown of which her own was the twin sister.

'May I see you in the ladies' dressing-room for a moment, Miss O'Brien?' Madelaine requested in a low voice.

'Certainly,' said Katie, following her. She was glad of any occasion that would postpone her meeting with Peter Romain.

The dressing-room gained, Madelaine dismissed the attendant and closed the door. Then she turned on Katie with all the furious hauteur of her Forsythe blood.

'You impudent little shopgirl,' she stormed imperiously — 'daring to try to humiliate me before my friends by wearing an imitation of my own gown! Oh, I know you sneaked out the model and had it copied! And I know the person you coaxed into letting him pay for it!'

'Say, you be careful with your mouth!' leaped hotly from Katie.

'Oh, I know! Shopgirls can't pay for such clothes! It was Billy Gordon who paid! But I'll say

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

he shows mighty poor taste in the girls he picks up to play with on the side!

'I told you to be careful, or else —'

'Oh, don't think I object to your being Billy Gordon's mistress!' Madelaine raged on. 'But I do object to his mistress putting on my clothes and parading —'

Katie's right hand shot out and her open palm cracked against Madelaine's left cheek. There was an amazed shriek. Her left hand shot out and cracked against Madelaine's right cheek. There was another shriek, and Madelaine cringed backward and crumpled down upon the divan, from which she looked up in shrinking terror.

'Just one more word like that, just one more word,' Katie burst out, her fingers flexed threateningly, 'and you won't be humiliated by the idea of there being two green gowns! There'll be just one green gown, and I'll be wearing that gown. I've got a notion to take you apart, anyway, just to see what such damned things are made of! Now, are you going to behave? Better speak quick! Are you going to try to be a good little child and behave?'

'Yes — yes!' choked out the terrified girl.

'Then sit right where you are for a good long time, and make up your mind so that it will stay made up!'

Katie turned and walked out of the dressing-room. On the stairway she met Lily Spencer, hurrying up.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'What have you two been doing?' anxiously inquired Lily.

'Your doll friend was too inquisitive about my dress. Better go on in and sweep up the sawdust.'

'But, Mary, I too saw that your gowns were the same. You know I'd have been willing to buy you all the gowns you could want. I'm — I'm sorry you let Billy Gordon buy you —'

'Listen,' interrupted the infuriated Katie. 'Billy Gordon hasn't ever bought me a single thing except the quart of gasoline that brought us here. I'm not so sure yet I'll even let him buy my dinner. I like you, but if you start to talk the same kind of talk as that Forsythe girl, I'll give you the same —'

She cut herself off and hurried on. But as she came into the dining-room, now singing with the strains of the dance-orchestra, her hot anger disappeared with the abruptness of a blown-out candle-flame. Peter Romain arose from the table where he had been talking with his close friend and former captain and came toward her.

'Miss O'Brien, Mr. Gordon has yielded me the honor of asking the first dance with you,' he said pleasantly. 'Shall we try it?'

She had no chance to escape by excusing herself, for he at once slipped an arm about her and swung her away. Even amid the turbulent criss-cross of emotions which possessed her, her consciousness registered the fact that Peter was the perfect dancer — lithe, strong, with a smooth, scarcely perceptible

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

and yet most obvious strength, as graceful as a man can be. They circled the floor twice, and then without a word to her he seated her at an empty table for two, took the chair opposite her, and with a gesture informed Rogano that he wished neither service nor interruption.

His gaze at Katie was direct, smiling, mocking.

'It's a great pleasure to learn that Miss O'Brien, the little protégé of Miss Spencer, is after all not resting in a watery grave. How's tricks, Katie?'

'First-class, Angel-Face.'

Her tone and look defied him. At her use of his old nickname, he flinched and his face momentarily twisted into a wry look.

'Seems we've both gone up a long ways since Cherry Lane, Katie. Know what I'm doing these days?'

'Undoubtedly a lot of things you prefer the public shouldn't know. What the public does know is that you're a dancer at the Alessandro.'

He chose to ignore the thrust of her first sentence. 'Yes, I go on every night at the Alessandro after the theaters are out. But I've got a chance to hook up in a big way next season with a big revue — if I get a partner who knows what her feet are for. My present partner is just so much beef that hasn't yet been canned. By the way, Katie, you've certainly sunk your hooks into a good soft thing.'

'What do you mean by that?' she demanded.

'Don't put on that show of being huffy, Katie.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

I've lived along Broadway, and I'm no simp. You know very well, girlie, just what I mean.'

'Say it out! What do you mean?' Her black eyes were blazing at him.

'Well, if you want it in words of one unmistakable syllable, Katie, girls such as you are don't pay for such glad rags as you have on. A man does it. I congratulate you, Katie, and I also congratulate Billy Gordon.'

Katie was filled with the same sickening rage that had seized upon her only a few minutes before in her scene with Madelaine Forsythe. The table was set and amongst its cutlery was a knife having a shining steel blade that narrowed to a dagger's point. Katie's hand clenched the handle of this.

'Any more of that kind of talk out of you, Angel-Face, and you'll never dance another dance!' she gritted at him. 'I want you to know that, except for my shoes, the total cost of every rag I have on me was under fifty dollars, and I paid that myself! I get thirty-five a week at my job, and not a penny more from any source. Now are you satisfied that the war was wasted because it let you come out of it alive, or do you have something else you'd like to say?'

Peter Romain at first had blanched at her gesture and her intensity. Then his *sangfroid* had returned.

'Not a thing in the world to say, Katie. Except that you are the same devil of a Katie of old Cherry Lane. What the motion-picture people still love to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

call a "hell-cat." And while admitting that you're not gold-digging on Billy Gordon, permit me to say, as my private opinion, that you're pretty much of a fool in not conducting such aforesaid mining operations.'

'That's strictly my affair!'

He eyed her speculatively for a long moment.

'Only thirty-five a week, with your looks and your ability to wear a queen's clothes like a queen! That's sheer waste, Katie. There's no reason why you and I should quarrel. A wise kid such as you are should be coining dough, and I'm the lad who can help you. Listen, Katie: I can get in with any kind of a bunch, and I have two or three little affairs on the side into any one of which I could stick you. Your share might average about ten times what you're now pulling down.'

'Honest money?'

'Well — no party concerned would ever dare come out in the open and say it was dishonest.'

'Up to your same old games!' Katie exclaimed scornfully. 'Want me to go out and pick pockets for you — only now I suppose moral pockets — just the same as you wanted back in Cherry Lane! Absolutely nothing doing! Angel-Face, there's not an honest thing about you except your looks!'

His handsome face flushed angrily.

'You'd better be a little careful,' he warned grimly. 'Why this alias of "Mary O'Brien"? You must have some good reason for hiding under that name.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

You try to be too smart, and I may tell your nice friends just who you are.'

'Go ahead and tell; I don't care!' Even as she said this Katie realized that, to an extent, she was bluffing. She proceeded to make the bluff stronger. 'I call myself Mary O'Brien just because it suits me. I'm not afraid of anything; I've nothing to hide. All my new friends know I'm a poor nobody from an East Side tenement. But as for you' — she drove at him — 'pretending to be of noble Italian blood! Suppose I should tell your rich friends that your nobleman of a father is still running a cobbler's shop in a Cherry Lane basement and has never been anything better than a cobbler? And suppose I should tell them that you ducked into the army just in time to duck Sing-Sing? How about it, Angel-Face? And, by the way, since you must be hungering for news from home, I ought to tell you that I dropped in on your family six months ago; they were having a stew for dinner, mostly garlic. I might arrange for your friends to visit your ancestral castle for a bit of home-cooking.'

Under this taunting Peter's face had become black with passion.

'If you ever dare —'

'Oh, I'll dare all right, Angel-Face! I never was afraid of you, and am not afraid of you now. But get this. So long as you behave fairly decently, you can be of just as old nobility as you like and there'll not be a peep from me. Otherwise, all's off. And

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

especially get this. Miss Spencer is a friend of mine, and if you do anything with her that's not straight, you won't last a day in this town. Now have I made myself clear enough?'

Peter glared at her in baffled, rageful silence, in which menace lurked. Katie gave him back the steady glare of the conqueror.

There might have been a further outburst if Lily had not come up just then with the statement that Madelaine Forsythe had changed her mind and wanted to dine elsewhere. The party separated awkwardly, with Madelaine persistently in the background, her two cheeks high-colored with a red that never came from a rouge-pot.

CHAPTER X

‘MIND telling me what the trouble was about?’ Billy Gordon asked diffidently when Katie was again beside him at their table.

‘Chiefly about this dress,’ she replied briefly. ‘When I get home I’m going to get out my scissors and cut it into rags. You were right. They all did think you had paid for it — that you were paying for all my clothes.’

During the last few minutes an amazing thing had taken place within Billy Gordon. He had just seen three remarkably good-looking, remarkably dressed young women, and in that intimate comparison Katie had suddenly stood out for him, had leaped into a bewildering preëminence. And he had sensed that, whatever the trouble among the young women might have been, she had emerged the victor. Deeply moved, he impulsively leaned close to her.

‘Please, Mary, won’t you let that be the truth? Won’t you let me buy your clothes? All your clothes? For always?’

She half sprang up, her eyes striking at him with their lightning. ‘And you dare think that, too!’ she choked out. ‘You, too, dare to think I’m that kind of girl!’

‘Mary — Mary — you don’t understand!’ he

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

gasped in his dismay. 'I'm — I'm asking you to marry me.'

Katie slumped down and blinked at him. Altogether too much was happening this night.

'I beg your pardon,' she mumbled. Then her eyes steadied, appraised him. She was still in the sway of her fighting spirit, was proudly, ferociously perverse.

'Thanks for the compliment. But why should I? You're nothing but a loafer, a rich bum. Marry you? Never! Tell the waiter that this fried sole is fried oilcloth, and tell him I don't like my oilcloth fried.'

Billy Gordon, aghast, held a loose face upon her. He had thought that at some distant time he might propose to some vague girl, and he had vaguely dreamed of this proposal as being a period of prolonged flight through blissful, rainbow-hued romance. Well, at last he had proposed, and for the first time; proposed without a moment of premeditation; and the affair had been as prolonged and blissful as stubbing his toe in the dark. He felt dizzily sick; as important as a child's balloon just after it has been pricked by a pin.

They ate, rather pecked at, their food in almost unbroken silence, their remarks being the perfunctory ones necessitated by the service. Katie would not dance with him between the courses. She almost hated him, and she hated herself for hating him. Her insulted pride required that she should blame

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

him as the cause of most of the mischief of the evening — for was not he the rich young man who had been her escort when she had been compromisingly too well dressed? On the other hand, her innate sense of justice insisted that she herself was primarily to blame. So altogether she was having a thoroughly miserable time.

Presently there came an interlude in the dancing, and Rogano's little cabaret had its turn. Rogano had the practice, in use at about the same time by Balieff of the Russian Chauve Souris, of personally introducing each act and each chief performer. He had the further practice of leading his favorite performers out into his audience and introducing them to his favorite guests. It was evident to Katie that Billy Gordon was one of Rogano's chief favorites, for Rogano led the best of his performers to their table for a brief chat. This introduction of alien personalities was a distinct relief to the tension of the pair.

Katie had not been paying much attention to the cabaret, so she did not catch the name which prefaced Rogano's announcement of 'that sweet singer of the heart's old favorites.' But this last phrase she did catch, and looked up. Her heart almost stopped beating.

There on the little stage, bowing to the preliminary applause, was her father: the father she had not seen since sometime before her mother's death, when she had been eleven going on twelve — eight

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

years or more; the father she had despised and hated; the dodging of whom had been one of the dominant motives of her life.

He sang 'My Wild Irish Rose,' 'Mother Ma-chree,' 'Silver Threads among the Gold.' And among other songs he also sang, with an emotion that stirred his own soul, those same woeful old-time ballads that Katie, then a child of twelve, had burlesqued to her street audience from the high stage of her tenement stoop — 'Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage,' 'Mother Was a Lady,' and 'The Drunkard's Lone Child.' Strangely enough to Katie, his audience liked his singing of these sob-songs of an almost forgotten generation. And even more strange to Katie, she also found herself thrilled by this voice she had last heard in her childhood. His was a true Irish tenor — with proper training and care it might have been a great Irish tenor: sentimental, light, soaring, delicately thrumming the heartstrings. He sang with full belief in every word and note; and his movements had that spontaneous grace which is among the supreme gifts of the Irish.

When he had bowed to his last encore, Katie stiffened with a new terror. Rogano was leading her father straight to their table. She wanted to run — run far away. If she remained, she would be recognized, and all she had feared would follow. But she did not run. In a petrifying fascination she sat just where she was, waiting, without breath.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Miss O'Brien,' said Rogano, 'may I have the honor of introducing Mr. Terence O'Doone?'

Her father bowed deeply, and offered his hand. 'Tis a pleasure, Miss, to meet a grand young lady whose looks are as sweet and tuneful as any song.'

She laid a limp, chill hand in his. He had not known her!

He was then introduced to Billy Gordon, and the latter invited him to join them at the table, which he did. He forthwith tried to acknowledge this hospitality by aiming the beginning of a gallant and extravagant conversation at Katie. But Katie's mouth held only a dead tongue, and he perforce shifted his talk to Billy Gordon.

Thus left to herself, Katie studied her father with supreme intensity of mind and emotion. The impressions and opinions of her early childhood were still without a blur. Nineteen was now recording the impressions and opinions of eight years later. On this close inspection, her father's evening clothes appeared to her rather worn and shabby; shabbiness would be the first detail to be detected by the Katie of Madame Ravenal's training. In her memory he had always been old and unendurably terrible. In the present he strangely seemed neither. He was only in his early forties, and the gray beginning to show in his hair really helped it. Why, he was really handsome, except for a blariness of the eyes. Katie knew many men of his age who still considered themselves young. And she noted that he talked well, in

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

excellent English; with that flavor, that rich overtone, which distinguishes Irish speech at its best. If in manner or words he was extravagant, the error was on the side of graciousness, a too open charm. He was a portrait done in high colors, but throughout in thorough harmony with himself.

To the eyes of nineteen this different picture of her father was as strange as a new world. She was not just then conscious of any alteration within herself, but Katie was beginning to feel something of what her mother had felt when her mother had sought to defend her father against Katie's bitter attacks during that hour which had preceded her mother's death. Whatever might be his faults, certainly her father was a gentleman.

Katie had now begun to listen.

'You might not believe it, sir,' her father was going on in his sonorous voice, 'but I was not brought up to be what you now see. I was brought up in the Church, to be a priest. And a priest I almost was when they cast me out. 'Twas a just sentence; I have no complaint, sir. I was too fond of the folly of the world. And likewise I was too fond of the drink. And then I married a fine woman who was too good for me. Heaven forgive me for the poor devil I am, but her I killed off by not being a proper and steady husband. And so you see me here, sir — just a poor singer, though out of honor to the grand art I try to sing as well as I can.'

Katie's voice now came for the first time: a

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

voice that was no more than a stiff, dry whisper.

'Was there — was there any one else in your family?'

He turned to her with courtly deference.

'There was. A daughter, Miss. Meaning no offense, Miss, but had she lived she would have been about your own age.'

'Then she — she is not alive?'

She had already noted that he had had too much drink. He now became slightly maudlin, but even though broken by memory he did not lose his courtly dignity of manner.

'She is not, Miss. She drowned herself in the Hudson River years ago. She left a note for my sister. It was because of me that she ended her young life — I know that. Her suicide almost made me quit the drink. The two women that should have meant most to me I killed. In Terry O'Doone you see a sorry thing to be called a man, Miss.'

'What — what was your daughter's name?'

'Katie. Katie O'Doone.'

'Katie O'Doone!' Her name came from Katie in the thinnest of whispers.

There was a brief silence while her father gazed courteously upon this splendid young woman from another world. Then a strange power, which seemed no conscious part of her, possessed Katie and drove her on.

'Singing here can't pay you very much. Why don't you try for something better?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'When a man has reached my years and has reached nothing better than this, there's nothing much higher that he can reach for with hope. But I have had my idea. I think it is a good one. At any rate, as old as I am, it is my last chance.'

'What is it?'

'A father-and-daughter act. We'd be "The O'Doones," you know. Such acts are pretty popular. If they're good, they can be fitted into almost any kind of entertainment. But I haven't the girl for the stage daughter. A girl who'd be good enough for the act could easily team up with a better partner.'

'This stage daughter — what would she have to do?'

'Not a great deal if she were pretty. Sing a little — dance a little — hand me the cues for my lines and my songs. Of course I'd expect to carry the real business of such an act.'

'And this stage daughter — you might call her — Katie O'Doone?'

'Why, I'd thought of that, yes. I'd like it. It might make me feel as if I hadn't — But I think you understand.'

Then the force which had been driving Katie onward broke all bounds. She could think, feel, but one thing. She was filled with it. This man was her nearest kin, her own flesh, her own father. And all these years she had misjudged him. Now she wanted him — wanted nothing else — wanted him with all

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

the mighty impulse of her selfish, hungry, generous heart.

She reached across the table and gripped her father's hand. 'Please' — she choked out — 'won't you let me be your stage daughter? Won't you let me be Katie O'Doone?'

'Miss O'Brien!' ejaculated her astounded father.

'Mary O'Brien — what *is* the matter?' exclaimed Billy Gordon.

'I can act that stage daughter, Mr. O'Doone! I know I can act her! I know I can!'

'What — a grand young woman like you asking to do such a belittling thing as my stage daughter!' cried her father. 'Why, it's out of your head you must be, Miss!'

'I want to be Katie O'Doone!' she clung to him the tighter. She could not let him go. Besides, there was the inchoate sense that she was returning to her real self. 'I want to be Katie O'Doone! I want to be Katie O'Doone!'

The two men blinked in utter amazement at each other; then stared at this brilliantly garbed young woman who wanted the obscure and thankless rôle of stage daughter in an unshaped, unbacked, and dubious enterprise, and who kept repeating in a tense, choking voice: 'I want to be Katie O'Doone! I want to be Katie O'Doone!'

CHAPTER XI

BILLY GORDON and Mr. Terence O'Doone continued to gaze in wonderment at this young woman who was so insistent in her desire to be Katie O'Doone, the stage daughter in this proposed team of 'The O'Doones,' a team that obviously could have only a future of poverty, hardship, and obscurity.

'But, Mary, this idea is utterly absurd,' Billy Gordon continued with his objections. 'I mean no offense to Mr. O'Doone, but it would be no life for you, and you'll be much better off working just where you are now.'

Mr. Terence O'Doone, known to his friends as Terry, had recovered from his first surprise sufficiently to perceive that this young woman was thoroughly in earnest in her amazing request. 'The young gentleman is altogether right, Miss O'Brien,' he said with courteous gravity. His earlier manner of being a fine if impoverished gentleman, of being a real if unrecognized artist, entirely left him, and he was now just a simple man of bared soul trying to give advice to a strangely deluded young woman. 'Believe me, Miss O'Brien, 'tis a hard life. And whatever I may have said of my own glory, the truth is there's no glory in it at all. And there's little money, and it would lead to no place for a young woman. And don't be forgetting the fault that lost

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

me my wife and daughter. I mean the drink, and drink is often the stronger man of the two of us.'

'But your idea, a father-and-daughter act — that is sound?' Katie persisted.

'Such an act is sound. And it's good, as I told you, if the two people in it are good.'

'If I can act the bits you want acted, would I be good enough for the part of your stage daughter?'

'As for that, Miss O'Brien, just the fresh young looks of you would be enough.'

'Then it's all settled!' exclaimed Katie. 'I'm going to be Katie O'Doone!'

'But, Mary, you simply must not —'

Billy Gordon was interrupted by Terry O'Doone, once on the threshold of priesthood and now a mere singer in a rather obscure cabaret, but still possessing something of the urbane dignity of a kindly, liberal prelate.

'Permit me, Mr. Gordon. My facts may be more convincing of the futility of the proposition than your expostulation. Miss O'Brien, please consider these hard facts in addition to the other objections I have already mentioned. Time would be required for rehearsing: that's an important item. There exists no act, only the idea; an act would have to be written and paid for. There would have to be costumes, perhaps something in the way of a setting; these would mean money. To be frank with you, I have no money, and no method of raising money.'

'I'll supply the money,' was Katie's prompt

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

response. 'I think I have enough that I've saved. And even if I don't know anything about stage acts, I know how to buy costumes cheaply. So it's all settled!'

Both men continued to argue. But when Katie O'Doone's heart was set upon a thing, she usually went straight ahead until she got it. Finally, Terry O'Doone threw up his hands in a gesture of surrender.

'All right, Miss O'Brien. But again I warn you; 'tis your risk and 'tis a great mistake you're making.'

While she had been fighting to win this greater point, a lesser point had been formulating in Katie's quick heart and brain. She tried to handle this new idea with great caution.

'Of course, I'll be just your stage daughter, Mr. O'Doone. But wouldn't it be wise if we were to start off with the pretense that we are really father and daughter? It might sometime make it easier for me; there are the conventions, you know. A girl — she must think about the conventions.'

Katie did not care one dime about the conventions.

'I've often thought of the very same thing when I was thinking of my idea,' agreed her father. 'The thing would make the act more impressive and interesting to the public. A made-up family act is never so effective, never gets the same money, as a real family act of the same merit. There were the "Four Cohans" who were so popular in vaudeville

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

when I was hardly more than a boy. That family act would never have gone so well if the public had not known that George's father was his real father, and so were his mother and his sister.'

'Then it is thoroughly understood that in public, on or off the stage, we are to behave toward each other as if we were real father and daughter?'

'Just so, Miss O'Brien.'

She was certain he did not understand how far she had committed him by that promise; but she thought it wiser for him to gain enlightenment by degrees. Next Katie's inborn canniness began to function. She recalled from her childhood how her father could not be safely trusted with money.

'Since I am putting up the money,' she said, 'I think it only just that I should be the treasurer of our little concern. You see, I'll be paying all the bills.'

'The treasurer you shall be,' he agreed.

'And the receipts, you consent to my handling them? Of course, I shall turn over to you a proportional share to be agreed upon.'

'The receipts are to be handled by you, Miss O'Brien. I could not fail to yield to so fine a lady.'

They talked over other matters. A little later there was a parting, with an understanding for a further meeting for the following afternoon. As Katie and Billy rolled northward, Katie was thrilled almost to the border of mad ecstasy. She was going to be with her father — work with him!

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

And he had not the slightest idea that his make-believe daughter of the stage was his own blood daughter! And if she managed well he would never know the truth — never!

While her imagination thus soared for several minutes, there was a silence on Billy Gordon's part that was almost vocal with Billy's disapproval.

'Mary —' he at last began, abruptly.

'Katie,' she instantly corrected him. 'After this, when you use my name, remember that it's Katie. Katie O'Doone!'

'Katie, then,' he accepted with asperity, and in a dogged tone. 'Katie, I grant that it was your privilege to refuse me when I asked you to marry me. It's your right to refuse or marry exactly as suits you. But as a friend I think you made a colossal fool of yourself in what you did to-night. That Mr. O'Doone is an interesting, educated, colorful character. But you were a fool, nothing else, to agree to a combination, to what amounts to a work marriage, with a man who has admittedly ended the lives of his wife and his daughter — who is a drunken incompetent who —'

Katie already had the speaking-tube of the limousine in her hand. 'Stop!' she called to the chauffeur. As the brakes sharply slowed the big car down, she flung open the door and prepared to spring out. But Billy caught her wrist.

'Katie, what's the matter?' he gasped in dismay.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Nothing. Except that I'm going to walk home, since I haven't money with me for a taxicab.'

'Walk home, Mary, when I want to drive you home?'

'Drive with you and have to listen to that line of talk about my new partner and stage father!' she lashed out at him. 'Not on your life! You asked me to-night to marry you, and you remember what I called you. Well, this man I've taken on as my stage father is certainly not as bad as that, and he probably never had your chances, and I'm not going to stand for any such talk about him! Let go my wrist!'

But Billy clung on desperately. 'Katie,' he cried, 'either I'm crazy, or you're crazy — I don't understand the thing; but I promise not to say a single other word against what you call your stage father, or what you've decided to do! I didn't mean to hurt you! There now — please forgive me and get back in and let me drive you home.'

Katie hesitated, then she returned to her seat. The rest of the drive was a silent and dismal affair; and Katie developed so much contrition that when she was set down before her doorway she said impulsively:

'I know you tried your best to give me a pleasant evening, and that in everything you meant well. Forgive me for having been so nasty, Mr. Gordon.'

'Mary — I mean Katie!' he gasped at this unexpected reversal in her attitude. 'I say — won't you please call me Billy?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Of course, if you want me to. That is, just when we're together. But not before your friends. They wouldn't like it.'

'I don't care what they like! And say, Katie — you're going to let me see you again? And often?'

'Again, yes. But not often. You see, I'm going to be very busy. But if you do see me, remember there's to be no love-making nonsense. Save that for the girl you're going to give it to for always. Good-night.'

'Wait a second, Katie! There's a Billy that belongs to that.'

'Good-night — Billy.'

'Good-night, Katie!'

And Billy Gordon, for whom the evening had been a succession of unhappy events, rode off with the sensation that the evening had been one of unbroken bliss.

Katie was glad, when she came in, that Amy was asleep; she yearned for no further discussions that night. A further idea, a minor one, had come to her. Before undressing she gazed in grim thought into the small mirror that topped their dresser; gazed not so much at her entire self as at the sections of the green gown which the tiny mirror reflected as she changed her position. In her first anger she had said she was going to scissor the green gown into shreds. Well, she was not! That would be a victory for that Madelaine Forsythe, and she was not going to run from any Madelaine Forsythe. She would

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

keep the gown, wear it at times. That course would force the wrathful Madelaine Forsythe to be the one to scissor her gown into rags, or else hang it, with all her hate, among her permanently discarded and thoroughly dead garments. Katie's would then be the victory in this battle of gowns.

CHAPTER XII

THE following morning Katie, in her usual black dress, was in Madame Ravenal's at nine o'clock. She watched Madame Ravenal's office door, and after Madame Ravenal had been within the office long enough to care for her mail and the more pressing business of the morning, Katie knocked and was told to enter. Madame Ravenal regarded her with cold and severe eyes.

'I was just going to send for you, Miss O'Brien,' she began brusquely, without the waste of an instant. 'I have already heard about last night and some things you did.'

'Last night is what I came in to tell you about, Madame Ravenal.'

'Miss Forsythe has just telephoned me about your wearing the duplicate of her emerald gown,' sternly continued Madame Ravenal. 'You know very well, Miss O'Brien, that it is against my business rule to let a duplicate be seen in New York.'

'I know that rule, Madame Ravenal. But I forgot all about it — though that's no excuse. When it came to making an evening gown for myself, I just could think of nothing else but that emerald gown you tried me out in, and which was the first evening gown I ever had on.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'U-um! Miss Forsythe also demanded over the telephone that you turn in that green gown to me to hold for her, and that you be ordered to go. Otherwise I'll lose her patronage.'

'As for the going, Madame Ravenal, of course I'll go.'

The hard and judicial brusqueness of Madame Ravenal instantly vanished. 'You go!' she exploded. 'Nothing of the kind! It was a foolish thing for you to do, Mary O'Brien, copying a model I'd sold in New York. But you stay! Miss Forsythe is the one who is going to go!'

'Why — why —' stammered the bewildered Katie. And then: 'But that's the chief reason I came in to see you, Madame Ravenal — to tell you that I'm going.'

'Going?'

'As soon as you will let me out.'

Madame Ravenal's voice and manner were again brusque, severe. 'Miss O'Brien, you gave me your promise not to go to a competing establishment without first giving me a chance to meet the promised increase in your pay. And you further promised me not to make any change without first consulting me. Both those promises, Miss O'Brien, you have disregarded or forgotten.'

'I know, Madame Ravenal. But it was the first excitement that made me forget them. Later, I remembered. That's one reason I came straight to you — to tell you, and ask your advice. But I'm

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

not going into another shop. I'm — I'm going on the stage.'

'The stage!' exclaimed Madame Ravenal.

'Not the real stage. I only call it the stage because I don't know what else to call it.'

'Child, what on earth are you talking about?'

Katie told briefly of her experiences at Rogano's, her meeting with Mr. Terence O'Doone and her agreement with Mr. O'Doone to become the stage daughter in a father-and-daughter act to be given by The O'Doones.

'Why, of all fools, you are the most foolish, Mary O'Brien!' exploded Madame Ravenal, wrathfully. 'I know Rogano's; it's really pretty good for a second-rate place. And I've heard this O'Doone person sing. He's not bad at all for his sort. But, Mary O'Brien, for you — Say, have you ever looked at the credit notes at the bottom of the programmes of any first-class theaters?'

'I haven't been to many plays of that kind,' said Katie, most humbly. 'I haven't had the time or the money.'

'Well, if you had gone, and had looked at the bottom of the programmes, you would have read that the gowns of this star or that leading woman had been executed by Madame Ravenal. I furnish gowns that can put over a big scene just by their own quality. Therefore, the theater knows me, and is glad to do me a favor. I've often thought you might want to go on the stage, Mary. You drop

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

this idea of being a nobody of an O'Doone, and the idea of such a cheap start, and I'll land you in a first-class show right on Broadway, or my name's not Ravenal! In the chorus, of course.'

'Thanks, Madame Ravenal. But I've given my promise, you know. And I really prefer this other.'

Again Madame Ravenal exploded. 'Prefer to start with that O'Doone! My God! You're even a bigger fool than I thought you! Get out! I'm through with you. I've no use for such absolute idiots, Mary O'Brien!'

But Katie did not get out. For a moment she stood motionless, silent under the angry glare of her employer. Then, despite all the vows made to herself, Katie began to speak. Her voice was tremulous, husky.

'Madame Ravenal, can you keep a secret? One that will not harm you at all, but might harm me, if it got out, in all I ever want to do?'

'If I couldn't keep a secret, I'd not last long in this business,' was the gruffly snapped response.

'Then — then, Madame Ravenal — my real name is not Mary O'Brien. My real name is Katie O'Doone.'

'Eh!'

'And that Mr. Terence O'Doone, he's my real father. Though he doesn't know it.'

'What!'

Then very briefly Katie told the true story of her running away almost eight years before; of her later

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

fraudulent suicide, this chiefly to make her father believe she had passed out of his life; of the later years of hiding from him, regarding him as the most feared bugaboo of her life.

'Last night,' Katie continued, 'I found out that I had been mostly wrong about my father. I want to be near him. That's why I decided to be the stage daughter in that father-and-daughter act. I think I don't really care much for the stage, and I don't think I'll ever be much good. But father needs some one to look out for him, to take care of him.'

'Katie O'Doone!' breathed Madame Ravenal, staring at the girl whom as a favor she had taken on as a nobody of a stock-clerk. And then: 'But why don't you tell Terry O'Doone you're his real daughter, and have everything in the open?'

'I'm afraid that might spoil everything. I've been thinking my father and the chances all over. If he knew that I was his own daughter, he might like me, but I might have no control over him. I now think that perhaps some of the old trouble was that my mother didn't know how to handle my father. He's a sort of big, imaginative, romantic boy, and I think he might always feel restless at being managed by a woman of his own family. I think my only chance is for him to think me a stranger, and think himself under big obligations to me, afraid that I may quit him at any time. He needs a lot of careful managing, Madame Ravenal, without his resenting the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

management or taking the management for granted. I think this is the best way of managing him.'

'Katie O'Doone, your being with your own father, and him just thinking you're a stage daughter he's picked up!' marveled Madame Ravenal in a low voice. She gazed in awe at Katie for a long moment; then went on: 'But how about other people? You'll meet some old acquaintances who, seeing you together, will recognize the true relationship. Then what will happen?'

'I think I've already taken care of that danger, Madame Ravenal. I've suggested to my father that, to help along the act, we are to present ourselves everywhere as really father and daughter. We've agreed to treat each other as such in public. Then, if we meet any old acquaintances, they'll believe just what they see, and he'll think he has fooled them. He will be the only important person deceived, and I've got to keep on deceiving him.'

Again Madame Ravenal stared in awe for a long space at the girl. Then she stood up, gathered Katie into her arms, kissed her again and again. 'Katie O'Doone,' she burst out chokingly, 'I'm a hard old, tough old, money-grubbing woman without a chick of my own. But I'd give my shop and all I have for a daughter with a head and a heart like yours! God alone knows where that head and that heart are going to land you!'

'Why — why — Madame Ravenal —'

But Madame Ravenal cut short Katie's stammer-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

ing bewilderment by abruptly resuming her chair. She was instantly the efficient woman of business, with a telephone in her hand, imperatively demanding a number. She got it.

'Connect me with Jake Eisinger, and don't tell me he's not in. . . . That you, Jake? This is Ravenal. Jake, I've got a girl here I want you to give a thorough once-over. Cut your appointments and give me an hour at eleven. . . . What's that? A lemon? You little Kike, you, I've never handed you a lemon yet, and if this girl isn't the goods I'll pay your synagogue charges for the rest of your life. . . . Eleven o'clock, then? All right, we'll be there. And if the people in your outer office try to hold us up, just tell them in advance that I'm bringing along two dozen of my sharpest hatpins, with no intention of sticking them into hats.'

Madame Ravenal hung up and looked at Katie. 'I don't want you to go even into this small thing, Katie, without a high-class test. That Jake Eisinger, whom we are going right over to see, is the best judge of an act in the city, and he can give the best of coaching for dancing and singing when he thinks the material is worth while. Put your things on and we'll be going.'

Katie had no words to express her appreciation of this swift functioning. But she did have another idea, which also she had considered during the long night. This idea related automatically to her old friend, Morris Blum, who had now won his way to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

being assistant musical director to one Barney Feinham, an ambitious but as yet none too successful manager whose firm belief was that the next few months would be notable chiefly because he had suddenly burst into full bloom on Broadway and knocked 'em all dead with the biggest musical comedy success of the season, perhaps of years.

'Please, Madame Ravenal,' said Katie, 'may I telephone a friend? I'd like him to be present.'

'Go to it. Only make it snappy.'

Katie used Madame Ravenal's telephone, and was fortunate to find Morris Blum in the office of Barney Feinham. Of course Morris would come; and half an hour later he met her on the sidewalk just outside Jake Eisinger's office.

'I've only time just now for a word, Morris,' Katie whispered. 'I'm here to be tested by Mr. Eisinger. I'm going on the stage.'

'Not surprised,' Morris hurriedly whispered back. 'Lately I've often been thinking of you and the stage. Eisinger's a good man in his line, and you try to do just what he says exactly as he tells you to do it. Don't try to be yourself. Be what he thinks you are. And do everything straight, Katie — do everything straight.'

They passed through Jake Eisinger's outer office, which was a blur of eager yet vapid-faced young men and women, and into Jake Eisinger's inner office. This maker of Broadway stars was a thin little Jew, in a rumpled suit that suggested that it

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

served him both for his day-dress and his night-dress, with a face that was all parchment-covered bones and dark eyes that were weary, brooding yet brilliant. A cigarette drooped from his thin lips.

A few words to him from Madame Ravenal, and they all passed on into a dingy room, perhaps thirty by fifty feet, that constituted the famous Eisinger Studio. Here Katie was asked to sing. She knew only her father's ballads, and when she announced her repertoire, the fat, pimply young man at the piano shrugged his shoulders and threw up hands indicating helplessness. These things were to him prehistoric. The next moment Morris Blum had pushed the fat young man from the piano bench and was fingering the keys with soft encouragement.

'Remember what I said, Katie,' he again warned her under his breath. 'Don't forget yourself. No tricks. For the present sing 'em straight — sing 'em straight.'

She tried to sing 'em straight — as straight as her father would have done; and to Morris's playing she sang 'Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage,' and 'My Wild Irish Rose.' She felt she was making a failure of the singing, and she was neither surprised nor hurt when at the end of the second song Jake Eisinger remarked through the slit beside his cigarette:

'That's enough for the singing. Now let's see what the gal can do with her feet. Abe' — this to the original pianist — 'tell Sadie to rig her out in something easy she can dance in.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Fifteen minutes later, in bloomers and dancing slippers, Katie entered from the little dressing-room. Abe was now at the piano, tinkling out the popular professional dances of the day.

'Dance it all straight, as they want you to,' Morris reiterated in his whisper. 'Dance it just as it's written and as that bird at the music-box plays it.'

Now the dances written for 'acts' are for the most part either eccentric or acrobatic; and they require an especial technique and muscular development for their adequate professional rendition. The finer art and charm of the dance, any inborn grace, have nothing to do with them or their success. Katie obeyed Morris's warning and kept step; with her innate sense of rhythm she could not do less; and she tried to put the required muscular vivacity into her movements. She was glad when the fat young man dropped his pudgy hands at his side at the finale. Again she felt that she had failed.

'What do you think of her, Jake?' demanded Madame Ravenal.

The wearied Jake replied as if Katie were not present. 'Good ordinary material, that's all. Good figure, good hair, a face that will do. No personality. Can sing a little. Same about her dancing. She'll pass in a small way, with training. I'll train her if you want me to, Madame Ravenal. But I wouldn't be shooting straight with you if I didn't tell you right now that after all you've brought me a lemon who will never get anywhere.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'You're a damned fool!' ejaculated Morris with sudden vehemence.

Jake Eisinger turned his tired, undisturbed, bright eyes upon this presumptuous interloper. 'Just who might you be, wise boy?' slipped along his cigarette. 'And what might you know about what the theater of to-day requires?'

'Nothing,' admitted Morris, subsiding in sudden humility. But when Eisinger turned to speak to Madame Ravenal, Morris whispered to Katie: 'Make a deal for training with Eisinger if you can and if you're really going on the stage. He's the best coach for this line in the game.'

Therefore Katie spoke up promptly: 'Mr. Eisinger, even if you don't think much of me, I want to study with you. I have a little money, not much.'

'I'll back her for the rest, Jake,' promptly put in Madame Ravenal.

'Just as you people say,' replied the uninterested Eisinger. 'I've told you what I think. I don't like to steal people's money — especially when I don't have to steal. It's all up to you.'

Arrangements were made for Katie's lessons in singing and dancing, and then came a parting, Madame Ravenal hurrying back to her shop.

'You pulled it off great, Katie,' enthused Morris when he and Katie were together in the street. 'You didn't show 'em a single big card you hold, and you hold a lot of high cards. Eisinger can teach you the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

routine: none better. Great stuff, Katie — great stuff!’

‘But I don’t understand you, Morris!’ exclaimed Katie. She had not been greatly disheartened by Eisinger’s diagnosis of her as a mediocrity. After all, she merely wanted to be good enough to hold a place in an obscure act as her father’s stage daughter and his foil.

‘I can’t explain, Katie — not even to myself. I have a lot of ideas, and I’m not certain about anything yet. But, Katie, what was the big idea in your dragging me into this present deal?’

She told Morris of her meeting with her father, of their projected act, and swore him to maintain before her father the secret of her identity. What she wanted of Morris was for him to write the new act, keeping her in a subordinate place and giving all the fat to her father. She told him just what her father was doing at the present time at Rogano’s.

Morris considered for several minutes. Then he spoke with brisk jerkiness to the point

‘Sure I’ll write the act, Katie, and it’ll be an easy job. Wish I could use some half-shaped ideas I have, but they wouldn’t fit that sort of a cabaret act. Here’s the general scheme: We retain in the act those songs of your father which are established favorites, and we build him up into a sentimental, romantic, delightful Irish father. I’ll look over your father to-night at Rogano’s and get his part all set. Get this, Katie: We Jews are writing the best Irish

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

stuff that's being written to-day. As for you, you'll be your father's Wild Irish Rose. A real rose — girlish, dainty, and all that line of stuff. That's your part. You'll hand him all his song cues, and they'll be as clever as I can make 'em. Also you'll have two little songs of your own — light, girlish, using mostly your upper register. Also you'll have two dances — just dainty, girlish steps to the music. I'll write in all your part, and I know what it should be. Now when do I see your father for a talk?'

They saw Terry O'Doone that afternoon, as Katie had previously arranged, in the lobby of a Fifth Avenue hotel. Mr. O'Doone recognized in Morris the Blum boy he had known slightly a decade before; and if he was somewhat superior, as became the artist he considered himself, he was benignly gracious, which he probably would have been even if he had not been feeling the warmth of the several drinks he had imbibed since waking. He accepted all of Katie's plans and suggestions. Morris was to have the act ready in a day, and was to direct rehearsals. Rogano's was naturally to be the first target of the act, since Mr. O'Doone was already an established figure there.

CHAPTER XIII

MORRIS BLUM was as good as his word and had the act ready the following afternoon. Further, Morris had the act in rehearsal within an hour, having secured from Barney Feinham for this purpose the free occupancy of an ill-lighted, and worse ventilated, room Feinham had under lease for similar uses, and which was then empty for most of the day.

Morris proved himself an exceedingly good director. He knew the points he wished the act to score, he knew just how to appeal to Rogano's dinner audience, and he knew how to handle his cast of two. Katie, though unpracticed, was no problem; a word to her was enough. But Terry O'Doone, who despite his admitted shortcomings considered himself a minor master, had to be directed by such adroit indirection that he believed all the suggestions relating to his part came from his fertile and experienced brain. And Morris was also patient, with the patience of his amazingly patient race.

Katie's ever alert mind had gone forward another step. She had learned her father's address, and an hour after the three parted following the first rehearsal, she was at her father's rooming-house over between Third and Second Avenues and was interviewing the landlady. She convinced that slatternly

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

and suspicious individual that she was Katie O'Doone, and she gained permission to await the return of her father in her father's room. She knew he was coming back before his evening's work at Rogano's.

The soap-loving Katie almost went sick when she entered the room. It was a small dark cubicle such as the rooms of cheap lodging-houses are subdivided into. The cot-bed was not yet made up; the sheets had not been washed in weeks; there was a single crumpled rag of a towel on the teetering washstand; the floor looked utterly unacquainted with a broom. Katie drew aside the curtains which served in lieu of a wardrobe; not a garment was behind them except the evening clothes her father wore at Rogano's. She went through the drawers of the dresser, and found a few collars, a dicky, two torn shirts, some underwear that was torn — and not another thing.

So this was the home, this the wardrobe, of that really fine figure of a man who was her father! Now really sick, Katie sank into the single chair. While she sat there waiting, she thought and thought — and ideas came.

Presently her father entered, not noting her in the dusk. He lit the single gas-jet — the one jet was a symbol of the house's character — and then he saw her. He was surprised, but he sought to keep the manner of gracious dignity.

'You here!' he exclaimed. "'Tis a pleasure, Miss

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

O'Brien, even though my quarters are not fit —'

'I'm not Miss O'Brien,' she interrupted. 'Call me Katie. It was agreed that you were to call me by your daughter's real name. And I'm to call you Father.'

'Very well — Katie, then. As I was saying, 'tis a pleasure to see you here, Katie, but I don't just see — don't just see — why you have come.'

'I didn't know myself at first. But I know now. I've come to take you away.'

'Take me away! Where?'

'Just so it's away from such a dirty landlady. I was thinking that a cheap, clean, three-room walk-up flat for the pair of us would be just about right.'

'Miss O' — Katie O'Doone!' he sputtered, staring at her in amazement and then in indignant self-respect. 'Katie, do you think I'd ever compromise a young girl like you by living with her? Why, the scandal to you —'

'You're talking plain nonsense, Father. It's the usual thing for a father and his daughter to live together. That's what we've bargained to be, father and daughter, and that's what every one will believe us to be, except ourselves. There'll be no scandal. And I'm not afraid of you, for I know you're gentleman enough to treat me just as you would your own daughter.'

'As to that last, of course I would. But as to our living together as father and daughter — of all the ideas!' He continued to stare at her, blinkingly.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Why, of all the ideas! But, Katie, there's the expense! Have you thought of the expense?

'The expense won't worry us after we've landed that father-and-daughter job. Besides, this really is a case where two can live more cheaply if they live together. And, besides, living together will give us a better chance for our rehearsing.'

He did not give up. He argued on, bewildered by this tenacious, clear-headed stage daughter; but when at length he had to leave to make his appearance at Rogano's, Katie of course had won. Two hours later, Katie left an old-fashioned house in a neighborhood whose lack of popularity made prices comparatively low, having paid a month's rent in advance on a three-room apartment that contained a bathtub, and whose kitchen delighted Katie's heart by having washtubs.

Her next job, an unpleasant one, was telling Amy Miller. She knew in advance just how her roommate would take the news, for, although Amy was loyal, loving, and lovable, her whole life was circumscribed by convention, strict respectability, and a profound regard for what will people say. Amy reacted precisely as Katie had expected. She was horrified when she learned that Katie was going on the stage, learned of the very low order of the stage to which Katie was dedicating herself, and learned that Katie had picked up an old man and had off-handedly proposed to him that she be his stage-daughter. Her horror became almost hysterical

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

when she learned that Katie was going to live with this man. Her horror was painfully genuine, as also was her concern for Katie; but Katie chose to regard them lightly.

'Now don't pretend to think I'm a lost soul, Amy, you dear old dumpling, for you know I'm not a lost soul. And you know very well that you want me just as much as ever to be your bridesmaid when you marry Jimmie Harmon.'

'Of course I do, Katie!' Amy wailed. 'But have you thought of this? — your going will leave me all alone, with all the expense of this place on my hands.'

'You're just saying that to hold me here, Amy. Anyhow, wouldn't you be leaving me here all alone, with all the expense, when you marry your nice Jimmie Harmon? Talk sense, old moon-face. This place is a bargain, and dozens of nice girls would jump at the chance of sharing it. I'll arrange to mention the place to-morrow to several of the girls at Madame Ravenal's.'

There were kisses, and much weeping on Amy's part. That night Katie slept for the last time next to Amy, though Amy was never to pass out of her life. Katie O'Doone never forgot a friend, or a person who had helped her, or a person whom she had helped.

The next day Katie shopped carefully, rapidly, and cheaply, securing immediate delivery, and in the evening she had the apartment furnished, with

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

cheesecloth curtains at the windows, and was cooking dinner for her father and herself on the gas-range that stood in tender nearness to those beloved washtubs. All the time not required during the following days for rehearsals and Eisinger's lessons, she threw herself into joyous domesticity. She pinned up her skirt and scrubbed floors and walls with such a passion that dust hardly dared reënter.

But Katie's most thrilling domestic energy was directed at her father. She cooked him good meals, she washed and mended his clothes, she darned his socks. Also she replenished his wardrobe in the matter of socks, underwear, shirts, and neckties. She was drawing heavily upon her savings; but that worried her very little, for she was confident of the future and its fortune. In all this the chief driving force was her new love. That love was not so much the love of a daughter for her father as the love of a mother for her clever, irresponsible son who was never going to grow up.

To Terry O'Doone this vitality, initiative, industry, and devotion were inexplicable. Fate had certainly teamed him up with a most bewildering stage daughter. He had first seen her in brilliant evening dress, an undoubted lady; and here that lady was, apparently happy in toiling to make him a home. She was a mystery. Occasionally he questioned her about her past, but when his questions sought to touch certain phases — such as what had been her childhood, who her parents — the answers

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

he received were laughing words which only increased his puzzlement and the mystery.

All the while Katie's heart was crying with desire to tell him the truth. But her head held her to her plan. All the world might know the truth, save he alone. Yes, he must never, never know!

At times, when alone in the flat, face down on her bed, Katie loosed all control and cried over the situation. It was cruel, fantastic tragedy to her. And yet it had to be just so. There was no other way.

During all this while, of course, there were the daily rehearsals and the lessons at Jake Eisinger's. On the day after she had established herself in her wonderful flat, Morris Blum earnestly said to her in a long aside:

'Katie, don't you get Jake Eisinger wrong. He knows how to train people, and squeeze out one hundred per cent of what is in an act. But clever as Jake Eisinger is, he only sees the people and the act exactly as they're handed him. He doesn't see what people may become; he hasn't the imagination, or else that just isn't his kind of job. Stick to Eisinger; he'll do you good.

'But, Katie, I'd like to have you have a try-out with people who can see beyond their noses, even if they're long Jewish noses. You'll need some kind of a good usable voice in this business. Now I think you have a real voice — and why shouldn't you, being Terry O'Doone's daughter? I think you should work at your voice. There's old Archer Gregory,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

one of the best voice men in America. I'd like to have him hear you; like to have him teach you if he will. If we can fix it so that you'll fit into one of his empty half-hours, he'll be glad to have you and he'll let you pay when you have the money. You see, Gregory's biggest interest in life is to teach people. I'll talk it all over with Gregory if you give the word.'

Katie gave the word, and the very next day she had her first lesson with Archer Gregory. He was a plump, bald little man, very dictatorial on all matters pertaining to music, very simple and human on all other matters. Within the first ten minutes he had told Katie that she had, as a gift, a very unusual vocal organ. But gifts were one thing; had she also the patience and the willingness to drudge?

Katie at once announced that she had the patience. In the lessons which followed, little Mr. Gregory also demonstrated that he had patience, even if at times his temper was frenzied and explosive. He proceeded to give her voice a thorough grounding. As it was light in quality, he not unnaturally found that its best chance was in the development of the middle and higher registers. From the energetic Mr. Gregory, who lived in his music, Katie began to learn about such hitherto unknown things as breath control and the use of the head voice throughout her range, and she also learned the fact, amazing to her, that a singing whisper, if only it has resonant life behind it, can pene-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

trate to the farthest corner of the largest auditorium.

She decided that Mr. Gregory knew his business. And she also began to think that Morris Blum knew his business, unformulated and multiform though his business with Mr. Barney Feinham might at present be.

From the beginning of this new life, Katie was again on her sixteen-hour a day schedule. Shorter hours would have irked her, would have seemed a waste. There was the housekeeping. Of course there were the rehearsals, and the voice lessons. Then she installed a rented upright piano in the little flat, and she bought at a great bargain at second-hand a full-length mirror. Upon the piano she learned to finger an accompaniment to her vocal exercises, and before the mirror, over and over, always sharply critical of her every motion, she practiced the steps of her two dances and went through her part of the business of the act. Furthermore — this at Morris's suggestion — she regularly went through a set of exercises especially designed to induce flexibility of the body. Soon the smooth, supple grace was restored which was hers when she had done the swan dive from the top of Aunt Maggie's houseboat.

CHAPTER XIV

AT the end of two weeks the act had its try-out before Rogano. Rogano promptly took it, billed them as The O'Dooness, the price to them being sixty dollars a week and their supper. The act went well enough at first with Rogano's clients, but made no immediate sensation. Katie was not disappointed, for she had not expected a hit; she did not consider herself good enough to help personally in creating a strong impression.

Katie's share in the act was essentially what Morris had indicated in his first hasty outline. She was her father's 'colleen,' the object of his emotion whenever the act called for Irish emotion; she gave him his apt song cues; she was just a simple, motherless, appealing Irish girl; she had two charmingly simple dresses which she had made herself, and which Madame Ravenal's shop could hardly have made better; she sang her two simple songs in her light, floating voice that was improving every day; her two dances were hardly dances at all, just a dainty, graceful stepping to the music Morris had written for her.

Morris Blum was far more able than she then guessed; for that matter, she then had no better guess of her own ability. Morris Blum knew exactly the main effect he wished to create with Katie

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

O'Doone. The effect Morris wanted was that of girlish daintiness. And Morris got exactly that effect, though few besides himself knew it.

After a week or two the dinner and supper crowds at Rogano's grew larger and larger, until at length the little place could not accommodate all who sought entrance. The shrewd Rogano clapped an extra fifty cents upon the cover charge; he knew what was bringing this increased patronage, for he had heard the very pleasant remarks that were being circulated about the clever act of 'The O'Doones.' But he did not repeat these remarks to the O'Doones, and clapped nothing extra upon their salary. The genial Rogano's shrewdness was of the variety which is limited in its outlook to its own self-interest.

But that old trouper of saloons, second-rate cabarets and cheap vaudeville, Terry O'Doone, knew perfectly well what was bringing the crowds. It was their act, and since he was the dominant figure in the act, then of course it was Terry O'Doone. Terry O'Doone, so he thought, was at last beginning to come into his own, was at last being recognized. He became pleasantly important, his manner became even more expansive, he began to talk in large words about 'my act.' He was always most courteous to Katie, and he continued to regard her as a mystery; but he began to consider grandly that the whole change was of his making, and with swelling self-appreciation he began to regard his stage

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

daughter as that little O'Brien girl he had given her first stage chance. He was glad he had given her her start, for she was a fine girl. Yes, sir, Mary O'Brien, even if she was green to the stage and didn't do much to help out the O'Doone act, was certainly a fine girl!

Katie did not resent this strutting and condescending attitude of her father. As a matter of fact, Katie believed, as sincerely as did her father, that she merely filled holes in the act and that he was the glory and substance of the performance.

Katie's greatest struggle of this period, and of the period which followed, has yet to be recorded. This struggle had to do with her father's drinking. Terry O'Doone was never entirely sober, and rarely entirely drunk. Katie was not a technical prohibitionist; she had given no thought to the proposition of eliminating drinking by law. Her idea concerning liquor was undeveloped, but very clear: you had to be in shape to be on your job every day — that was all. Her father was not in such shape. He drank almost unbelievable quantities of bad gin and worse whiskey. And those things, in such quantity, cost a lot of money. So Katie started in, and the struggle she had made to cure her Aunt Maggie was as nothing to her struggle to cure her father.

Besides his habit of drink, she had to face a psychological difficulty. As treasurer she held the purse-strings, and might have refused him money. But after the development of his great-actor man-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

ner, she realized that it might be a mortal blow to the man in him, to his real man's pride which was her chief hope, to deprive him of money. Further, she realized that such a course might have no curative effects whatever: Rogano would give him drinks; he was a delightful man's man and his scores of friends would be only too glad to give him drinks in order to hold him in their company. So she decided to substitute her companionship for his whiskey; if she were always with him, he would have no opportunity for drinking.

She tried this method. It did not work. He liked her and liked her company, but he managed to excuse himself in public where she could not interfere — and he got his drinks then. Furthermore, she could not always be with him, since she had so many affairs of her own — and again he got his drinks. During the period of this attempt to be ever with him, he had as much to drink as he had ever had before. Katie in desperation abandoned this experiment and had a frank talk with her father and offered him a definite proposition. He was to have a specified amount of pocket-money for his own use each week — enough to keep him pleasantly inebriated — but not a penny above this amount.

Even when she made this agreement, Katie instinctively sensed that she was only temporizing, that her real battle was in the vague and misty beyond.

She had been at Rogano's for a month, and was

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

feeling easy in the harness of the new job, when one evening, just before she went on for the regular dinner performance, she was met, in the tiny corridor which connected the two tiny dressing-rooms, by Peter Romain. Peter was in the best-tailored of evening clothes, in manner he was the perfection of finished assurance.

'And so, Katie,' he remarked casually with his cynical confidence and superiority, 'you are trying to break into my line, you and your father. I'll say this for you, the O'Doone act is really not so rotten.'

'Thanks, Angel-Face,' Katie said mechanically. At that moment her predominant and rather breathtaking thought was that Peter Romain had accepted as a matter of course the relation between her and her father. That was exactly what Katie had wanted.

'But, Katie,' he continued, 'you are a fool for working with your bum of a father in a bum joint like this. I've already told you how you might be making real dough, working quietly on the side with me. You turned the idea down flat. Enough said. But, Katie, you might be interested in knowing that your old playmate is going to be featured as a specialty in a new show.'

'I'm glad of that, Peter.'

'Oh, don't be too glad, Katie,' he remarked, gracefully flicking the ash from his cigarette. 'I'm just going on with my dumb-bell of a partner, and it's only in a road production of a big New York

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

knockout.' He gave the name of what was then a great New York musical-comedy success.

'That's splendid, Angel-Face!' exclaimed Katie.

'That's nothing at all,' drawlingly commented Peter, lighting a match by an indifferent but expert flick against his thumb-nail. 'Katie, if you want to see speed, just watch my smoke. Just watch the smoke of Peter Romain.'

'I'll watch it, Peter,' she assured him, and hid her double meaning.

Of course, during these weeks, these months, Katie had her own individual life and had contact with her old acquaintances — with the sole exception of Madelaine Forsythe. Madelaine must have regarded Rogano's as a place beneath the high favor of her recognition; at any rate, during this period Katie did not once see her.

But of course there was Lily Spencer, who frequently rushed madly down to Rogano's for dinner and a bit of hurried gossip with Katie. Despite her admiration of Lily, Katie instinctively sensed that Lily was spending her money with a regardless lavishness, that she was galloping through life at too wild a pace. At times Katie had the impulse to speak to Lily, but she was always checked by the feeling that it would be very much out of order for Katie O'Doone, child of dingy Cherry Lane, to assume to advise Lily Spencer, daughter of aristocratic Park Avenue.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

And of course Morris Blum arranged his affairs so that every night he had his dinner at Rogano's, and so managed things that after his dinner he had a few words with Katie. Things went well between them, for Morris had a very human appeal for her, until one night, after their supper, Morris suddenly lost all control and blurted out:

'Katie, I've been telling you all my life, not always in words, how much I love you! Katie, I've told it to you often. You've had time to think over your answer, Katie. Will you marry me? — and marry all I hope ever to be?'

Katie could not be flippant, remorselessly hard, before the sincerity, the intense, emotion-governed gaze of Morris Blum. Therefore her reply was as direct, as honest, as emotional, as had been his question.

'Morris, I like you a lot. You're fine. You're the real stuff. There's no man I like better. But, Morris, I'm never going to marry! Never! Just get that idea settled in your head. But, Morris, I'd like to be friends! Morris, I'd like to be just as good friends as two people ever could be!'

He was motionless, silent, for a moment.

'Morris,' she urged, 'can't we be just good friends? You know — friends who understand each other, who try to help each other?'

She held out to him an impulsive hand. He seemingly ignored it for a moment, then he gripped it tightly. His face wore a pale smile that attempted

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

to exclude all passion, all long-treasured hopes.

'Of course we'll be just friends if you say so,' he responded huskily, but with an attempt at lightness to cover his pain. 'Just count me out — consider me settled. But, Katie, if you ever need a friend, just think of me at the head of the long list of your applicants.'

Morris afterwards regarded her hungrily, with the intense passion of the little race that has given the world so much of its passionate music, its passionate poetry and art, its passionate religion of ideals and self-sacrifice. But though Morris worked with Katie, never again did Morris speak of earthly love.

And among Katie's friends of these days there was Billy Gordon. Almost every night Billy Gordon had a table at the dinner appearance of The O'Doones, or came when they reappeared at twelve o'clock for the supper performance. Often he got Katie to sit with him. There was adoring hunger in his eyes, and behind the commonplaces of his speech. But he, like Morris Blum, did not again speak to her of love.

Katie liked Billy Gordon. Billy was a nice, honorable, clean young man — clean to the point of thorough sterilization, but, as in cases of thorough sterilization, no germs seemed left that might ferment a new and vigorous vitality. Katie knew that Billy Gordon was maintaining an office in which the affairs of his inherited estate were handled, in which office he was rarely seen. She also knew that,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

because of his financial holdings, he was a member of the board of directors of several companies of national importance; and she knew that when Billy attended a board meeting, it was a most perfunctory, uninterested, and even bored performance on his part. It was impossible for the tireless Katie O'Doone to admit to herself that she fully loved a man who was not doing some kind of real work. So, much as she liked Billy Gordon, there was at this period no passionate love within her. Subconsciously she classed him with her father: he was also a man who needed managing, who needed mothering.

And then, too, to kill off any possible serious thoughts of love, there was ever in the background of Katie's mind the figure of the elder Gordon, grim and cold, with his ruling mind fixed upon a daughter-in-law of high lineage. Why, even if she loved a man, she'd never marry into a family where she was not wanted! Not Katie O'Doone!

Thus the months rolled away for Katie. Winter passed, and spring. She had thought that the act would be laid off for the summer, and had managed to save a little for this exigency. Almost from the start she had foreseen that the act could not last indefinitely at Rogano's, and she had long wondered what she and her father should next do. But Rogano's custom continued better than expected and they were kept on through the summer, their act being freshened up by Morris Blum.

In October, when Katie had been at Rogano's for

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

almost a year and had been studying her music for the same period, the devoted and tireless Morris Blum had exciting news to give Katie over the supper table. The ambitious Feinham had been induced by Morris to come down to Rogano's two nights hence and view with a manager's cold impersonality the O'Doone act which Morris had kept on praising to him with conservative optimism. Morris's news spread, and Katie learned that Madame Ravenal was going to be present at the great test; also Billy Gordon; also Lily Spencer.

To Katie that approaching night, with such judges in the audience, loomed as the most important night in her career — not for herself, but for The O'Doones, which to her, of course, meant her father. She rehearsed and prepared for the great event with unfailing energy. And a large part of her time and vitality were expended in trying to keep the worshiped and magnificent figure of Terry O'Doone with enough alcohol out of his gracious, graceful, imposing body so that he could be splendidly effective when his effectiveness was a primal necessity to their future.

CHAPTER XV

At last The O'Dooness' great night came. Out in the dinner audience was that swiftly rising impresario, Barney Feinham, impatiently counting the minutes until he could size up those O'Dooness and then hurry away to more important affairs. In the narrow corridor off the little dressing-room which served Katie, and all the other women performers, waited Lily Spencer, Madame Ravenal, Billy Gordon, and the nervous and excited Morris Blum.

Katie, while hurriedly putting on her dress of the simple and unaffected colleen, was thrilled to the very core of her being. Important friends were present. She realized afresh that her part was only a small one, that she was only a 'feeder' to the important rôle of her father. She felt certain that she could carry off her insignificant part; her dominant emotion was to do her feeding so unusually well that Terry O'Doone would be inspired to rise to his best self. This was her father's great chance. He had to make good. So far as she could help him, he was going to be better than the highest point in all his career.

And then, of course, the unexpected happened. Though, of course, it was no more than should have been expected all the while. At half-past seven, just before the O'Dooness were due to make their

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

first appearance of the evening, Terry O'Doone staggered in helplessly and hopelessly drunk, but with his fine dignity assertive, and with the full one hundred per cent belief of the drunkard in himself.

The frantic Rogano faced one of the dire problems common to theatrical managers of all degrees — an essential actor appearing at the last moment in no condition to step upon the stage. Katie was likewise frantic at the dignified and haughty drunkenness of her father. With agonizing pain she remembered Barney Feinham, out there in front, who had been dragged down to Rogano's to pass judgment upon, and perhaps lift to a higher place, that sweet singer, Terry O'Doone. Her father had lost his big chance.

'You're fired, O'Doone!' Rogano shouted at him. 'Hell, but you've put me in one awful mess! Best crowd I've had this season, come to see you. I pay you good money, but you show up here fit for nothing except to sleep it off! I'm through with you — get out of my place, and get out quick!'

'Sir,' haughtily responded the dignified O'Doone, wavering on his feet, 'I'm all right. Can do my best. You're just ignorant, stupid cabaret manager. Don't know anything. You're nobody. Sir, that's you.'

'Get out of my place!' shrieked Rogano. 'You're fired, I tell you! I'll put those Rogers sisters in your place. Now get to hell out of here!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Terry O'Doone stared at Rogano in the withering surprise of a magnificent artist.

'You mean, sir, you have insulting arrogance to substitute those ordinary Rogers girls in place of Terence O'Doone?'

'I'd substitute a one-legged dog for you, you booze-hound!' shouted Rogano. 'Now get out of my place! I'm through with you — through with your act. Beat it, or I'll call a cop and have you thrown out!'

Mr. O'Doone made a low, sweeping, ironic bow which almost cost him his dignified balance and almost landed him sprawling on his face. "'Tis a pleasure, Mr. Rogano — should Rogano be your name, sir — to part company with the cheap likes of you. An artist, sir, even if you do not understand it, is always an artist. So good-night and good-bye to Signor Rogano. I'm saying words of my heart's greatest pleasure — good-bye to you, most honored sir, good-bye.'

Katie seized the arm of the great O'Doone. 'Wait, Father!' she exclaimed. 'Don't go just yet.'

'I've said good-bye to Signor Rogano, and good-bye it is. Unhand me, child.'

He pulled away from Katie and staggered into the men's dressing-room. She made no attempt to follow. She had been doing some rapid thinking during the scene between her father and Rogano. Her thoughts were not now about the waiting Barney Feinham out in front and the opportunity he repre-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

sented. She knew that the big chance was gone. Her thoughts were now all centered upon their act: how to hold down this ordinary job of theirs, how to keep on getting their necessary bread and butter.

'Mr. Rogano,' she begged — 'please don't fire us! Let me go on and do the act alone!'

'Alone! The whole act!' exclaimed the staring Rogano.

'For Heaven's sake, Katie, don't try that entire act by yourself!' ordered Madame Ravenal.

'Katie, you're out of your head!' cried Lily Spencer.

'Katie, don't be a fool, just to try to save an act,' expostulated Morris Blum. 'It's not worth it.'

'Keep out of it, Katie!' fervently breathed Billy Gordon. 'You're not to blame, and there's no reason why you should make a fizzle of yourself.'

The protests of her amazed friends had exploded so close together that they had the blurred effect of a mob's outcry. Katie ignored them all, and addressed herself to Rogano.

'Let me go on and do the whole act!' she begged again. 'And tell the orchestra to play exactly the same music — only ask them to watch me and follow me.'

Morris Blum suddenly remembered the performances Katie had given long ago on the stoop of the tenement down in Cherry Lane. 'She may be

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

right, Mr. Rogano,' he whispered excitedly. 'Perhaps she can really do it! Anyhow, give her a chance!'

The frenzied Rogano decided he would lose nothing further by allowing Katie this chance. So he gave his musicians the order she had desired, and Katie stepped out upon the little stage to attempt alone the popular act of The O'Doones.

Her own part Katie played daintily straight, as she was accustomed to play it; she was the charming and innocent colleen that the theater has idealized. But there were two people upon the stage, and there was dialogue in distinctly different voices between the two. Katie here found the real value of the tricks of ventriloquism which Aunt Maggie had taught her on that old harrigan of a houseboat. But when her father's lyric songs drew near her in the act, she realized she could not possibly sing them with Terry O'Doone's emotional belief. So, since she could not do else, she boldly but daintily burlesqued the ballads so dear to her father's heart: burlesqued them with sadly rolling eyes, with notes dolorously long held, with stiff, stagy gestures which had their own grace — all much as she had done from the stoop of the Cherry Lane tenement.

When she finished, there was a brief silence in the restaurant. Then came the bursting uproar of applause. Never before had applause brought Katie such relief. She felt just one thing: she had perhaps managed to save the job of the O'Doones. She

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

bowed and bowed, and with happiness in her heart she turned to the exit.

But her way was blocked by Terry O'Doone, who had staggered out upon the stage. He was a splendid if somewhat disordered figure of mightily insulted vanity as he faced her.

'You were a nobody and I took you in!' he cried out in full hearing of the audience and all who were in the dressing-rooms. 'I taught you all you know! I gave you your chance! And you express your gratitude — I saw you — by trying to make cheap sport of my act!'

'But — but — Father —'

'Don't father me — I'm through with this fathering business!' he continued to shout at her. 'It's been nothing but stage pretense. You're no daughter of mine — you — you —'

That was the moment when Rogano and Morris pulled Terry O'Doone from the stage and ended this public scandal. Katie followed him off. When she came into the little corridor leading to the women's dressing-room, she was embraced by both Lily Spencer and Madame Ravenal.

'You were stunning, Katie — stunning!' cried Lily Spencer.

'My God, child!' exclaimed Madame Ravenal; 'I never dreamed that you had that kind of stuff in you!'

'Why, Katie — why, Katie!' gasped the astounded Billy Gordon.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

But Katie hardly heard any of this in the din that was being made by the infuriated Rogano. 'O'Doone, you've been a damned fool, but I never knew that you were such an absolute idiot as to break in on an act as you have just done. I've already told you that you're fired. But I'll keep the girl; she's all right. Now get out of here and never show your face in my place again!'

'I have already expressed to you, with my highest compliments, my great happiness in being quit of you and the likes of you,' responded Terry O'Doone, with his tottering grand manner.

'If he's fired, Mr. Rogano, then I go too!' suddenly exclaimed Katie.

'All right! Then you're fired, too, if you want things that way!' cried the exasperated Rogano. 'I'd keep you, but I don't want you as a part of any such bum team as The O'Doones!'

'Then this O'Doone again says good-night to you, Mr. Rogano, and may it be a very, very merry night for you,' said Terry O'Doone, with his great actor's heavy irony; and with another of his ornate bows, he made a swaggering exit with unsteady steps.

'Go after him, Morris,' breathed Katie. 'See that nothing happens to him.'

'The worst has already happened to him, Katie,' Morris whispered back. 'He's going to be perfectly safe, and I want to speak with you.'

Just then a new voice broke into the conversation. The voice was crisp, yet sonorous; it belonged to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Barney Feinham who the moment before had come bustling in from out front.

'Fired, are you, Miss O'Doone, so I heard Mr. Rogano say? Well, you're hired.'

This was bewilderingly swift action to Katie, but she kept in her mind the dominating idea which had ruled there these many months.

'I go only with my father. Are you hiring him too?'

'I should say not! Not after what I've seen to-night.'

'Then thanking you, sir,' said Katie, 'but I'm sorry that I can't take your job.'

'Girl, you're crazy! That man's no good, and if you try to stick with him you'll only —'

'We go together, or I don't go!' Katie interrupted sharply.

'Listen, Barney.' There followed a bit of whispered conversation between Morris and Barney Feinham, after which Mr. Feinham said, 'All right, then. I'll take the two of you on. A hundred a week.'

'One hundred and fifty a week,' returned Katie, whose sense of money was alertly functioning despite all this emotional turbulence.

'Nothing doing at that price,' snapped Feinham.

'All right — nothing doing,' calmly agreed Katie, and turned away.

Morris Blum gripped Feinham's sleeve. 'Take her up at one-fifty, Barney,' he whispered rapidly in

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

the other's ear. 'And give me a third of it! I want a third!'

'Don't be a damned fool, Morris. One hundred is as much as she's worth at the outside, particularly with that bum of a father hanging onto her.'

'Take her at her price,' breathed Morris, 'and take her quick! I can write her into something. And remember — I want to own a third of her contract!'

'If you want to make a monkey of yourself, Morris, that's your business. I'm doing this on your say-so. Miss O'Doone,' he said aloud, 'all right — one hundred and fifty.'

'The terms will include my father?' demanded Katie.

'I don't want your father. I don't care if I never see him again. I'll take him, though — but only because you insist. Come around to my office and we'll fix up a contract.'

Katie promised to appear. 'Remember, it'll be up to you to handle that stage father you've lugged into this,' growled Feinham, and he jammed on his hat and made the exasperated exit of one who is hurrying from the presence of fools.

'Katie O'Doone, you're coming right home with me,' declared Madame Ravenal, seeking her own moment of dominance.

'Thank you, but I can't, Madame Ravenal — I must go home, to look after my father.'

'Your father won't be home to-night, Katie,' advised Morris. 'He's simply got to get to-night's

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

affair out of his system in his own way. I'll try to locate him; he'd rather see me than you just now. You go along with Madame Ravenal.'

'Let me drive you all home,' eagerly put in Billy Gordon.

So it was arranged. An hour later, in the sheerest of Madame Ravenal's nightgowns, Katie was in the thirty-second-story silence of Madame Ravenal's guest-chamber, in Madame Ravenal's huge bed of the Italian Renaissance, being fed milk and toast prepared by Madame Ravenal herself. And presently hard old, tough old, money-grubbing Madame Ravenal kissed her good-night and turned out the lights; and thereafter, for an hour, hard old, tough old Madame Ravenal, who had neither chick nor child, sat motionless on guard just outside of Katie's door, hoping there would be no sleepless sounds, and blinking the tears out of her hard old eyes.

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Katie awoke the next morning in the guest-chamber of Madame Ravenal, her first thought, after that dizzy smudge of the intelligence which follows awakening, was again of her father. Madame Ravenal informed her that already Morris Blum had telephoned in that he had located and had attached himself to the drunken artist who was still stinging under the insults to his professional pride.

‘I’ll go back to our flat at once,’ said Katie, ‘and wait for my father.’

‘All right; just as soon as you have had a cup of strong coffee,’ agreed Madame Ravenal.

Katie gulped down the coffee; and with no less haste she got into her clothes. Twenty minutes later she and Madame Ravenal were in the little three-room flat. The pair waited for a nervous hour, then Morris Blum ushered in Terry O’Doone, in the same evening clothes, now woefully soiled and rumpled, that he had last been seen in some fourteen hours before. He was trying to exercise severe muscular control over himself and was trying to give the perfect appearance of sobriety, which meant that in Terry O’Doone’s case there was a hangover which was equivalent to a somnambulistic drunk. Utterly unconscious of his crumpled clothes and soiled linen, he was formally courteous, was even the magnificent

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

gentleman. Perhaps, of all races, only an Irishman of the old Irish can carry off such a rôle in a manner that cannot and dare not be laughed at.

'Good-morning to you, ladies,' he said with a separate bow to Katie and Madame Ravenal, each of which was a miracle that set at naught all the laws of equilibrium. "'Tis a pleasure, ladies, far beyond the powers of Terence O'Doone to express, to have you both beneath my humble roof-tree.'

'Thank — thank you, Father,' breathed Katie.

Terry O'Doone centered his gaze upon her, and it became a gaze of highly offended, though still highly courteous, dignity.

'Miss O'Brien,' he remarked with another deep bow to emphasize his lofty severity, which second bow almost cost him his precarious balance, 'you're a very excellent girl in your intentions. In your perhaps instinctive but uninstructed intentions I commend you, Miss O'Brien. But although we are teamed up in a father-and-daughter act, I now wish that my decision be definitely known to you. Please understand that what we may do in public is in the way of business, but in such intimate personal relations as the present, we are not to carry on this stage nonsense and you are not to address me as "Father," as you have just done. The O'Doones, Miss O'Brien — my line of the family, at least — have the tradition of a respected and honored name, and that old tradition of my family I wish to maintain in all my private relationships. I trust, Miss

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

O'Brien, that without being unduly offensive I have made myself adequately clear to you.'

At this magniloquent reproof, all delivered in his most ornate stage manner, Katie at first could only stare blankly at the kindly condescending, authoritative figure of her father, whose rigid erectness was warning that all might go toppling at any moment.

'Why, of course,' she stammered, 'just as you say, Fath — I mean, sir. Just as you say, sir.'

'You are wise and understanding for one of your tender years, Miss O'Brien,' Terry O'Doone went on. 'It is wise, Miss O'Brien, that you have so promptly agreed to my revised plan for our future relationships. Now I understand from this young gentleman, whose name should be familiar — ah, yes, it is Blum — that during my temporary — ah — absence you assumed the authority to enter into a contract elsewhere for the team of The O'Doones, and at one hundred and fifty dollars a week. Is this information correct, Miss O'Brien?'

'Yes, Fath — yes, Mr. O'Doone.'

'That action has my approval,' he continued from his benign heights. 'In that new arrangement you now can see the concrete evidence, Miss O'Brien, of the great value of a working alliance with Terence O'Doone, at your service. You were nobody; I picked you up. I do not mean that a boaster's words should have birth in my mouth, Miss O'Brien; but I cannot refrain from calling your attention to the great

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

thing which has happened to you. And I cannot refrain from giving you a few pertinent words of wisdom: if you will only watch me, and try to play up to my standard, then the team of The O'Doones —'

But Morris Blum, at his side, had had all he could stand for that moment. He gave Terry O'Doone a gentle shove, and the great and benign O'Doone fell sidewise upon a couch-bed, in a very comfortable position, and instantly was in a sound sleep.

Madame Ravenal gripped Katie's shoulders. 'Damn that old souse of a father! You're coming right along with me!'

'I'm not!' Katie flared back at her. 'And you can go right to hell!'

The two glared at each other, most fiery anger and antagonism in their eyes, for a long moment. And then, as sometimes happens with the right kind of women, they were suddenly clutching each other, and kissing each other, and crying over each other.

Morris and Madame Ravenal slipped quietly out together, leaving Katie in her jealous mother-guard over the sleeping infant-man who believed all their relationships confined to his being the stage's stock figure of the father with a stage daughter whom he coddles and adores upon the stage. Two days passed with him in bed, a sobering, sick, and contrite man, during which Katie, always beside him in a light,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

hovering doze, either anticipated his needs or gave him physical aid when his desires were expressed in speech.

Terry O'Doone, great drunkard that he was, remembered nothing important that had taken place during his last big drunk, as is very common with great drunkards. He had no memory of the scene in which he had forbidden Katie to call him father, so Katie continued to call him father. The prime facts of which he was conscious were that he had been drunk, that in consequence he was now very sick, and that that O'Brien girl he had picked up was trying to take very good care of him. A loyal girl, that Mary O'Brien — really an unexpectedly fine girl, and he'd see that she did not suffer in the future, even though she did not add very much, beyond filling the place of the necessary daughter, to the act of The O'Doones.

As for Katie, during these days she thought of very little else except how to mother her clever, helpless child-father back into passable form.

On the third day he was up and dressed; somewhat pale and wobbly from his recent experience of having drunk within twenty-four hours perhaps a gallon or two of ancient Irish whiskey — so said its label — which had been made a few days before by cautious and industrious Italians down on West Houston Street. A sort of humility lurked indistinctly in the far background of his manner, as of an unpleasant memory that is not to be recognized or

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

put into words. He was again the urbane, gracious, magnificent Terry O'Doone. He was very kind to Katie, with that grand and gentle kindness which seeks to remove all sting from an obvious superiority. He often assured Katie that she could always count upon him, that Terry O'Doone would forever and aye look after her.

During his 'indisposition' — that's what he called it — he learned from Katie more about their improved business opportunity. Though he did not remember, he took it for granted that he had made this arrangement. So on this third day after the beginning of his indisposition, Katie at his side, he swaggered into the office of Barney Feinham and with Katie he signed a contract giving exclusive control of the services of The O'Doones for a period of three years at one hundred and fifty dollars a week for the two when employed — which was three or four times as much as Terry O'Doone's personal engagements had ever earned for him.

When they had regained the street he was more than ever the benign, gracious gentleman toward his stage daughter, who as yet, green colleen that she was, seemed not properly articulate over the service he had rendered a worthy young female creature.

'Tis an old saying, Katie, but 'tis nevertheless true,' he impressed upon her — 'real merit eventually is recognized and wins its due reward, as you have just seen in the securing of our excellent con-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

tract. And permit me to add, Katie, that it has been a distinct gratification to me that I have been able to help you onward and upward.'

'I appreciate all you have done and I thank you, Father,' responded Katie in her best girlish humility. But giving him a sidewise glance, she thought worriedly whether she was ever going to be able to keep this father of hers sober enough to hold down his new job.

They reported together for rehearsal at ten o'clock the next morning. Feinham was just then engaged in one of Broadway's established business devices. Feinham had a musical comedy, 'Bubbles o' Laugh,' which for months had been very distinctly a success in New York, but whose popularity had so worn out that the play was to close in New York in two weeks. However, it still had money possibilities as a road show, and Feinham was preparing to send it on tour. The ancient and therefore honorable Broadway custom Feinham was following was to send his show out billed as 'With the Original New York Cast'; in fact, Feinham was then busy in ridding himself of most of the chief actors who had made his show a success and replacing them with lower-salaried actors. And that the customary lie should not be wholly a lie, he was breaking in these substitute actors to play out the remaining unprofitable performances in New York. Therefore, if ever challenged, he could truly say with the pained and righteous virtue of a theatrical manager that his

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

cast was the New York cast and he could produce New York play-bills to prove his statement.

However, Feinham was keeping one member of his really and truly original cast. This was Kitty Adair, who had been baptized under a long, queer-looking Polish name. Kitty was not the lead; she had the part of the modernized soubrette, who seems a necessary ingredient of all present-day musical plays, a cute, pretty, acrobatic little Miss Mischief who is always up to delightful tricks. Kitty was paid four hundred a week, and was worth it, and Feinham knew it.

Katie was thrown straight into the chorus, had no greater prominence than appearing as one unit in a flock of girls, and her name appeared on the programme far back amid the advertisements among the ladies of the ensemble. Her father fared much better. In 'Bubbles o' Laugh' there was a bit of a part for a father, and the father had a bit of a song. In Feinham's second-hand original company this bit fell to Terry O'Doone, and his name appeared up among the principals, and he was very proud. On the whole, considering the positions they then held, The O'Doones were really being very well paid.

During these first days Katie was in fair content. Of course she did not like her job in the chorus. Not that she thought herself too good. On the other hand, despite Morris's coaching, despite Mr. Gregory's teaching, and despite her fighting pride,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie really thought she was not good enough. She did not like the job for the simple reason that there was not much work to do. Of course there were the rehearsals. But at regular performances she was in the theater only about four hours, and of that time she was actually at work only some sixty minutes. Her singing lessons and practicing did not take up much time. Such a schedule could never easily harmonize with the nature that existed within Katie O'Doone.

In the quick substitutions that were being made in the cast of 'Bubbles o' Laugh,' there was one change which gave Katie a genuine surprise. A second established ingredient of every such production is a pair of dancers. Katie's surprise came at the beginning of a rehearsal — she had at that time appeared in the chorus in four public performances — when Peter Romain, accompanied by a superior-looking and amazingly dressed young woman, walked out upon the ugly, undressed stage. Katie quickly learned the truth: the girl was Peter's dancing partner, she had assumed the professional name of Mitzi Malone, and Romain and Malone had been signed on to take the place of the clever and expensive team which had helped 'Bubbles o' Laugh' to win its now ebbled New York prosperity.

The rehearsal, every one in street clothes, got under way. Katie soon had to acknowledge Peter Romain to be an extraordinarily good stage dancer;

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

but Mitzi Malone, for all her superior and sophisticated airs of the theater, was merely ordinary. Katie knew that Peter recognized her; and she saw him speak to her father, who was obviously flattered by this attention from a member of the company ranking much higher than himself. Katie watched this meeting breathlessly, fearful of the exposure which might ruin all the splendid hopes she had built upon her deception. But her father did not remember the smart-looking Peter Romain as the young boy he had long ago occasionally seen down in Cherry Lane. Peter saw this, and since Peter was never one voluntarily to remind another of his lowly origin, the meeting passed without mishap. Katie breathed again. Perhaps Peter never would suspect, and so be led to reveal, the deception she was practicing on her father.

When that rehearsal was over and all were leaving, Peter stopped Katie near the stage-entrance and drew her aside

'If again it isn't Katie O'Doone, the old friend of me childhood,' he said mockingly with exaggerated pleasure, while he gracefully lighted a cigarette. 'Katie O'Doone and her father and me all in the same company. And yet people don't like to believe in coincidences!'

'It's no wish of mine that we're to be together!' Katie flared at him.

'No?' drawled Peter, with his taunting look. 'Now, Katie, I'm different. I really wish you better

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

than you deserve — better than being a nameless nobody in a bunch of chorus girls.'

'If I do better, it will not be because of you, Angel-Face!' she exclaimed. 'It will be because I've tried!'

'Now don't let's get personal and fight, Katie,' he said, flicking gracefully at the ash of his cigarette. 'Remember, Katie, my childhood's dearest memory, that you and I are booked up to work together for quite a while, and it doesn't pay to fight while working on the same job. By the way — when some time ago I spoke to you about having a big job in the near future, this present job is not at all what I meant. This job is just accidental, and fills in time. Besides, Mitzi Malone hasn't got the class; I'm letting her hang around just because she's good enough for present circumstances. When my big chance comes, Mitzi gets a can tied to her and I find a new partner who possesses the necessary class. By-by, Katie.'

He lifted his hat with his taunting courtesy to Katie the mere chorus girl and sauntered away, lightly swinging his malacca stick.

CHAPTER XVII

THE routine of rehearsals and performances continued without incident. Peter Romain did not again seek to impose his society upon Katie the poor chorus girl, and Katie fitted more easily into the exact maneuverings of the chorus and consequently her grace became more free and her spirit more infectious. And of course, while not herself rehearsing, and forced to stand about, she was eagerly watching the principals go through their parts, and of course she was remembering what she heard and saw.

Then this harmony of hard work was interrupted for Katie by another surprise. The surprise was due to Kitty Adair, who had a wild verbal explosion during an afternoon rehearsal of the new 'original company.' The cause was never known; perhaps the cause was that the demure and sweet Kitty Adair had a barbaric Slavian temper, or perhaps the cause was that Kitty had just exchanged a shop-worn husband who had been in her sight for all of two years for a brand-new husband, and had suddenly decided she could not bear to leave this absorbing domestic novelty for the dull, hard life of the road. At any rate, she burst into Feinham's office, a figure of concentrated fury.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'I'm quitting you damned Kikes!' she cried out the instant of her entrance. 'You'll never see me again — unless on another manager's stage!'

'But, Kitty, I — I don't understand —' the flabbergasted Feinham began.

'Don't you "Kitty" me, Feinham!' broke in sweet Kitty Adair. 'And if you don't understand, I'll try to make the point clear to that sour, over-cooked mess of oatmeal you call your brain. I'm quitting the show, Feinham. Is that clear to you? And I'm quitting this minute! It's entirely up to you whether you cut out the part, or get another girl. This is good-bye, and to hell with you!'

But Feinham was up and had a grip on the wrist of the hand that was gripping the doorknob.

'Kitty — you can't be quitting me like this?' he demanded.

'Oh, I can't! Well, I'm doing it, ain't I?'

Then Feinham remembered his legal rights. 'You can't do it, Kitty. Not without giving me proper notice. You know I've got you under contract.'

'You and your contract be damned!'

'But you'd better remember, Kitty, that I can sue you for the breach of that contract.'

'Sue if you want to! Sue! But I'd stall your old suit along in court for a dozen years. And then, if you do win, I've got a husband who's able to pay any damages you ever get. Now you let go of me, Feinham, or you'll have a suit of another kind on your hands — a suit for assault and battery with

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

injury to the body, and if you have not already made black-and-blue marks on my arm, I'll make 'em myself as evidence to show the court!'

Feinham let go. The next instant sweet Kitty Adair was out and a slammed door had sealed her exit. Feinham sank limply into his chair, for the time unable to express himself, and stared for a long moment across his desk at Morris Blum, now promoted to be his musical director, who somehow seemed always to be present when difficulties were about.

'Morris,' Feinham presently exploded in tragic verbosity, 'did you hear what Kitty said? Do you know what Kitty's done? And Kitty's right about one thing — I can't ever get anything out of her that won't cost me more than I get! But the show, Morris — the show! I can't cut the part out — you know that — and it's now four o'clock, and I ask you, Morris, where am I to find a new girl, train her for the part, and have her made up, all by eight o'clock? I ask you that, Morris!'

'You already have her,' said the quiet Morris Blum.

'Me already got her!' cried the frantic Feinham. 'Where have I got her hid? But mebbe you're trying to make a joke, Morris. Mebbe you think I've got her hid under my gold tooth!'

'You've got her hid in your own chorus.'

'A girl to take Kitty Adair's part out in my bum chorus! A joke's a joke, Morris, and I'm willing to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

laugh when I've got time — but just now's no time for you to talk like a fool!'

'Her name is Katie O'Doone,' continued Morris in his even tone.

'Katie O'Doone! Why, that girl hasn't even been in a first-class chorus yet! And she's just now breaking into her first real show!'

'Katie O'Doone's been in shows all her life — only she doesn't know it. I think she can do the part.'

'But, Morris — her just a chorus girl, and her to learn such a fat part in three, four hours! Morris, you are a fool!'

'I think Katie O'Doone already knows the part, and probably every part in the show,' Morris replied in his quiet voice. 'Anyhow, I'm willing to work with her from now until the curtain goes up, rehearsing her in anything she doesn't know.'

'But, Morris — she hasn't got the voice to sing Kitty Adair's songs!'

'You've never heard her sing anything that gives her voice a chance. Right this minute she has twice the voice of Kitty Adair — and, Barney Feinham, if you want to hear something, you listen to her voice a year or two from now!'

Feinham threw up the hands of resignation. 'All right — go ahead and be a fool with the girl, Morris! Anyhow, we've got to have some one to fill that hole in the play; and I guess it's lucky for us that there won't be much of a crowd out in front to-night to see the bust. But you make it plain to the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

O'Doone girl that she's just filling in for a couple of performances, and I'll get busy and find a real person for the part.'

That night Katie O'Doone went on in Kitty Adair's old rôle. She seemed to please the small audience of the waning show. Morris had been right about Katie. Having the gift of eager eyes and ears which automatically record everything, and having the power of reproduction, she spiritedly went through Kitty's lines and business without a slip. Also she sang Kitty's two solos in a fresher, purer tone than they had ever been sung by Kitty. Very distinctly she was a success with the small audience of the waning show.

'What did I tell you, Morris?' demanded Feinham when the curtain of the first act descended. 'Didn't I tell you that that Katie O'Doone was the girl for the part? Didn't I say she could sing? Wasn't I right?'

'You were absolutely right,' replied Morris, not so much as blinking a disagreeing eyelash.

At the final curtain Feinham, before most of his company, told Katie that he was going to keep her on in Kitty Adair's part. He did not say, however, that she was to have Kitty Adair's four hundred a week; in fact, he said nothing about money at all, and Katie's salary was not raised. As for Katie, for once she did not think about more money. What she had just done in Kitty Adair's part was the easiest work she had ever done; she really did not think she

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

was very good; and she still considered herself very well paid.

When Katie at the end of Feinham's announcement reached her dressing-room door, there stood her father. Terry O'Doone regarded her in a new manner. In the past, even when drunker than usual, he had always treated her with the respect due himself and a lady. Now he gave her the awed reverence due to one far above himself.

'Permit me to compliment you on your wonderful performance,' he began with reverent humility. 'I did not know you could act so well, sing so well — and to go on in that part, practically without notice, and do everything so splendidly — why, Miss O'Brien —'

'Katie O'Doone!' she cut him short.

'Why — why — what's that?' he stammered in surprise.

'I said at the very start that I was going to keep the name of Katie O'Doone. And we're going to remain the stage-team of The O'Doones — father and daughter.'

For a moment he could only stare at her in his bewilderment over what she had said, and its implications. 'You mean, Miss O'Brien — Miss O'Doone —'

'Katie O'Doone!' she repeated.

'I beg your pardon, Miss O'Doone —'

'Katie!' she corrected. 'You are to keep on calling me Katie, and I am to keep on calling you father.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Still bewildered, he bowed deeply before this recently humble stage daughter who had been so suddenly elevated to an eminence far above his own. 'Katie, then, if you wish it. But, Katie, in our changed professional positions you, of course, do not wish to continue our former private relations.'

'Of course I do!'

'Katie!' he breathed, staring at her. 'Katie O'Doone! Katie, I appreciate the new standing that being your father will automatically give me, and I'll try to treat you with all the consideration due so fine a daughter from her father, even though he is only her stage father.' Again he bowed deeply, for once not entirely at ease. 'Good-night, Katie.'

'Kiss me good-night!' she ordered.

Aghast, Terry O'Doone stepped backward a pace. 'Why — why —'

'Kiss me!'

Then he understood — or thought he did. That good-night kiss was just a new idea of Miss O'Brien to help maintain the pretense of their relationship. So he stooped, and his very deferential lips met hers. Then he stumbled away in amazement at what fate had given him as a stage daughter — having never a remote guess that the good-night kiss of their rôles was on Katie's part the realest of real kisses given by a real daughter, suddenly love-hungry for her father whom she had just then kissed for the first time in almost ten years.

Peter Romain had seen that kiss, though he

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

had heard nothing; and before Katie could enter her dressing-room, he was at her side.

'Nice to see you keep up the old-home stuff with your father, Katie,' he remarked.

'It's more than you do!' she snapped.

He ignored this. 'Slipped across to congratulate you, Katie. You went over fine.'

'No thanks to you!'

Again Peter chose to overlook the brusqueness; for Peter was a young man with a quick and far-seeing mind, and he was not one to lose time when he had a vision. 'Listen, Katie. You're good. I'm good. I've got an idea for a play that would give fat parts to both of us. We're going to be together in this show for the season. Why not work together, fifty-fifty split, on my play all these months?'

'Hasn't it penetrated your head yet, Angel-Face? I've said it often enough! Remember it this time — you and I are never going to work together on anything!'

This time Katie gained her dressing-room, Peter watching her with the smile of one who calculates and bides his time.

A few minutes later, just before she left, Morris Blum saw her about the rehearsal for the following afternoon. The always busy Morris had been so busy that he had not had time to speak to Katie since the end of the play. He now gripped her hand.

'Katie, I knew you could do it! And you certainly did it!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'If I did it, Morris, it was because you made me do it!'

'You're wrong. I counted for very little. You did it because it was in you to do it. Katie, there's more in you than anybody yet dreams of. Katie' — he paused, then resumed in a subdued whisper — 'Katie, I don't know in what direction you're going, but you're going a long, long ways. I hope I'll have the good luck to travel along with you a bit on your way up.'

'Morris Blum,' she exclaimed, sudden tears in her eyes, 'what a friend you are! I never want a finer friend!'

'I'm glad you think that way about me,' said Morris.

Just a good friend — although he loved her — Morris had long since, after much quiet agony, accepted that as his final status and had gone about the affairs of his music.

Many individuals had said that Katie had done well on her first performance, but the newspapers did not say so. There is nothing more negligibly dead as news than a play that has announced the nearing of the end of its New York run, which 'Bubbles o' Laugh' had already done. Not a critic, not a feature-writer, saw Katie. So Katie O'Doone remained as unknown to the great New York public as when she had done her part in the little sketch at Rogano's, or as when she had understudied her Aunt Maggie as the medium on the old houseboat.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Of course, Lily Spencer came, and Madame Ravenal, and Amy Miller with her James Harmon, and many of Katie's friends from Madame Ravenal's shop; and of course all praised Katie. As for Billy Gordon, he was present at every performance. Also he was with Katie on every occasion when she would give him a minute. Adoration was in his eyes; but he was wise enough not to let it get into and out of his mouth, for he had a sharp memory of the evening at Rogano's when there had been a proposal and a scathing refusal in the record time of ten seconds flat.

Finally there came a Saturday night when the electric lights which printed 'Bubbles o' Laugh' upon the night went out forever in New York, and Katie O'Doone fared forth upon the 'road' — which word, in strictest orthodox theatrical usage, includes all of the United States except New York City.

CHAPTER XVIII

OF the next few months in the history of Katie O'Doone there is little to record, except that they were months of strenuous routine. Katie noticeably improved in her part; she kept to the exercise that had been prescribed to develop her suppleness and grace; and every single day, when there were not two performances and when she was within traveling distance of New York, she journeyed into the city and back in order to have a half-hour's vocal session with Mr. Gregory. Also, when the company played in any city for a week or more, Katie had a rented piano set up in her hotel room; and presently, by her intensive application for long hours, she learned to play it moderately well for a beginner. She could do a simple accompaniment to all her songs — Mr. Gregory had introduced to her the riches of song lore, and she was forever hungrily trying these new-old songs; and with every passing day her chance acquaintance with music grew toward a solid and abiding friendship.

During these months Katie had no roseate dreams about herself or her future. She was happy that her voice was continuing to develop both in range and quality, and the sense that she was helping to give pleasure to audiences was ever an uplifting joy to her. But she considered her part in 'Bubbles o'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Laugh' as just a job into which a combination of events and personalities had thrust her: just a job, as washing clothes had been a job, and she was determined to do this later job as well as she had done the earlier job back in Cherry Lane.

Her chief worry was still her father's inebriety. Terry O'Doone continued to regard his stage daughter with the deference which was the due of one who professionally ranked far higher than did he, but constant intimacy gradually impaired his sense of responsibility toward Katie. Despite prohibition laws he somehow managed to be half drunken all the time, never had full consciousness nor his full powers; yet he was never so drunk that he could not handle very adequately his bit in the play. This situation Katie had to force herself to accept, although all the while she was blindly trying to think of the one right way out.

Of course she had her other worry concerning her father: that through some mischance Terry O'Doone might discover that she was his blood daughter. Katie clung to her conception that her only chance to handle her father for his own good was for him to continue to regard her as a respected business associate. As a business associate she believed she might in some way influence him; as a member of his family, his own daughter, she believed that any possible influence would be lost.

This point of view Katie believed to be solidly substantiated by the concrete facts of her mother's

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

life: her mother had loved him, had tried to save him, but the fact that she was his wife, was his own woman, had robbed her of all influence over him. Therefore Katie was going to be of strange blood. She thought she had put over her deception extremely well. There might be some blundering slip — or say, a chance discovery on the part of Peter Romain. But the greatest menace to her deception Katie saw as the drunken, kindly figure of her Aunt Maggie. If by any chance Aunt Maggie, who also believed her dead, should stumble upon the pair face to face, then Aunt Maggie would recognize the truth, and Katie's deception and her hope for her father would crash into nothingness.

That fear of Aunt Maggie was ever lurking in the back of her consciousness. But she felt certain definite assurances against this danger from Aunt Maggie. In the first place, she was not the star of the play, and the road star's contract stipulated that she be featured solely in all paid publicity; therefore Katie's name rarely got into the newspapers. In the second place, Katie knew that Aunt Maggie's reading was confined almost solely to palms, horoscopes, and the forged labels on bottles of synthetic gin and bootleg whiskey.

Katie was playing in Philadelphia during the fifth month of the company's tour, when there came the first real interruption to her pleasant routine. One Friday afternoon she was glancing through a day-old newspaper when she came upon a column

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

telling of the death by suicide of a New York lawyer of most honored reputation. His death, however, was not the chief point in the tragedy for Katie: the chief point was that this lawyer had been the sole administrator of Lily Spencer's estate, and his death revealed the fact that he had been speculating with Lily's money and that there remained not one penny of Lily's fortune.

A growing dread crept upon Katie as she realized the full significance of this disaster. Lily's invalid aunt had died a year before. Katie vividly remembered that her high-born friend had recently been drinking with more reckless gayety than ever; had also recently been giving herself with more reckless abandon and more reckless expenditure than ever to New York's smart night-life. And now the extravagant, pleasure-loving, lovable Lily had not a penny, and had learned no method of earning one! What, what was to become of Lily Spencer?

Katie would have gone straight to New York and Lily, but there was the performance of that night and the two performances on Saturday. But at ten o'clock Sunday morning she was in New York, and a little later was at the Spencer house. Continued ringing of the bell brought no answer. She had already thought of Billy Gordon, so she now telephoned him, and at eleven o'clock the pair met at the Ritz-Carlton over a very gloomy breakfast table. Billy Gordon confirmed the worst news; for once, at least, the papers had been correct.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Lily's absolutely cleaned out,' he continued. 'I offered to loan her all she wanted, and so did a lot of her friends. But she laughed, and thanked us, and refused us all. She said she never had lived on borrowed money and was not going to begin now. I think she already had some scheme in her mind, but she wouldn't tell what it was.'

'Where can I find her now?' asked Katie.

'I haven't the slightest idea. I haven't seen her in two days.'

'Not seen her in two days!' exclaimed the shocked Katie. 'Do you mean to say that you have let two days go by without looking up Lily Spencer, with her in all her trouble?'

'Oh, I've tried to look her up all right. I've been trying to look her up during every hour, and in every place I thought she might be, and by every means I could command except the police, since it might hurt Lily to become a police case. But I've not found a trace of her. She's disappeared.'

'Disappeared!'

'Yes. And obviously disappeared by her own choice.'

They talked on over their breakfast, whose excellence and elaborate service could not diminish their gloom. It was obvious to Katie that nothing could be done in New York on a Sunday, with all offices of inquiry closed, to try to hunt down a girl who had voluntarily vanished; so, still in distress, she boarded the one-o'clock train for Phila-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

delphia. In this same absorbing distress over the lost Lily Spencer, she entered her hotel and stepped through the door of her room — and there, at her ease in a rocking-chair, smoking a cigarette and reading a theatrical weekly, sat the lost Lily Spencer herself.

‘Why — why —’ gasped Katie.

‘Katie!’ cried Lily, throwing aside paper and cigarette and springing up.

For a moment they held each other in a tight embrace. Then Lily pushed Katie from her, held a hand on each shoulder, and demanded with mock severity:

‘Give an account o’ yerself, ye crazy Irish colleen! Here be I after wantin’ to surprise ye, and when I comes makin’ me dacent Sunday visit ye make me sit waitin’ for ye for the whole of an hour. Now out with the truth, Katie O’Doone: where’ve ye been?’

‘In New York,’ replied the astounded Katie. ‘I came here straight from the train.’

‘I left New York on the twelve o’clock,’ said Lily, dropping her imitation dialect. ‘And I also came here straight from the train. But why should a hard-working young lady, who needs her one day of rest, run over to New York on a Sunday morning for an hour’s visit?’

‘Why — why, I read a few days ago what had happened to you. But to-day was the first day I could get away. I went to New York to find

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

you, and to see — and to see —' She hesitated.

'And to see if you could not help me?' Lily finished for her.

'Why — why, yes,' Katie admitted.

'Katie O'Doone,' breathed Lily, 'you are the dearest, damndest, darlingest little fool God ever made!'

Katie flushed, and for a moment could not speak. When speech did come, it switched back to the mystery.

'It was kind of you to come all the way over here to Philadelphia to pay me a visit, but I don't —'

'Pay you a visit!' interrupted Lily with a joyous laugh. 'Pay you a visit! Oh, what a joke!'

'But I don't understand why you disappeared as you did,' Katie persisted.

'Listen, my child, and you shall hear. Reason number one: it takes money to belong to the crowd I was in, and since I had no money I didn't belong — so I just promptly dropped out of it. Reason number two: I disappeared because I needed all my time for some business dickering and for my rehearsals.'

'Your rehearsals? Rehearsals at what?'

'Dancing. That's the only thing I seem to be much good at. And I've long had an idea in the back of my head that I'd rather like to be a professional dancer.'

Katie remembered this idea. 'But — have you a decent opening yet?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Better than that. I already have a job to dance.'

'Good! Where are you going to dance?'

'With Katie O'Doone. That's why I'm here.'

'Dance with me?' gasped Katie.

Lily laughed at Katie's bewilderment. 'Not exactly with you, but in your company. I'm taking Mitzi Malone's place and am going to dance with Peter Romain. Signed the contract with Feinham in New York last night, and have come on to hang around the show, picking up points and rehearsing with Peter, until Mitzi Malone leaves. She's been given her notice. I've been secretly rehearsing the last four days whenever Peter could run over to New York. From the beginning he's wanted me as his partner instead of Mitzi Malone, so when I went smash — well, you can guess the rest.'

Katie was suddenly sick over this stark fact of her friend, splendid despite her flaws, teaming up with Peter Romain. The association contained the germs of unguessable and endless danger for Lily Spencer.

'Don't do it! Please, Miss Lily —'

'Stop right there, Katie O'Doone! Here's where we straighten out one thing forever. For about two years you have kept up your infernal habit of "Missing" me, and I've had to stand for it. Well, I don't stand for it any longer! You're better and finer in every way than I am, you little mick! All I ever had was money, and that's gone. Besides, right now you hold a more important and better-paying job than I am to get. And, besides, you are

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

headed up and I may be headed down toward God knows what! So there! If you ever "Miss" me again I'll bite a large piece out of the back of your neck! I want to hear you call me Lily right now! Say it!

'Lily,' Katie obeyed.

'That's good! Keep it up!'

'But, Lily,' Katie went on with her protest, 'that Peter Romain is a crook. I know. I wouldn't trust him in a single thing. Without your suspecting it in advance, he might involve you in some frightful situation! Please, Lily, don't be his dancing partner!'

'Can Peter Romain dance?' Lily demanded.

'Of course he can. I give him the credit of being a truly remarkable dancer.'

'Then you've answered your own argument. All I want is a good dancing partner. I'm not as stupid as I look, and I know a little bit about this world we live in; so if Peter Romain ever puts anything unpleasant over on me, I'll blame just myself. No use talking any further, Katie. That subject's closed.'

Katie realized that it was. An entirely different subject had been buzzing in the back of her head; and after a moment's silence she broached the new idea.

'Lily, are you willing to do me a favor?'

'Surest thing you know! Just name it.'

'During the balance of the tour would you be willing to be my room-mate?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Will I?' cried Lily, again embracing Katie. 'I should say I will! It's the very thing I've wanted, only I've not had the nerve to ask you.'

They chatted eagerly on about living together and about the show; and after a time Katie said hesitantly:

'I saw Mr. Gordon in New York to-day, but did not ask him about himself. I've heard nothing about him during all these months. Do you know whether he has settled down to work?'

'He still keeps his office, and sometimes goes to it, for a few hours. But as for his working — Billy hasn't yet learned what work means.'

'I'm very sorry about that,' Katie said quietly.

'I say, Katie, why don't you marry him? Oh, I know he's asked you, because he told me so himself — and told me that you had turned him down.'

'I don't want to marry. And I'd never marry a man who wasn't enough of a man to try to do a man's work at something. No matter how much I might love him.'

'Well, you just remember that Madelaine Forsythe has no such scruples!'

'Has she — has she —'

'I should say she has! These last few months she's been after Billy harder than ever. She's clever and smooth about it, but Madelaine's the sort of woman that goes after a man with relentless determination. And almost any man, if he can't have his first choice, will finally accept his second choice when

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

that second choice seems to his eyes so graciously desirable. She's a sticker, Madelaine is, and in the end she'll land him!'

'I'm very sorry,' Katie again said in her quiet voice.

'A lot of good your being sorry will do him after Madelaine has landed him! She wants just his money, his position, his company on public occasions. For the rest, Billy can do as he pleases, be what he pleases, and it will be all the same to her. I can just see Billy Gordon after Madelaine's had about ten years' use of him!'

Katie made no response, and the subject was dropped.

In due time Lily Spencer stepped into the dancing shoes of Mitzi Malone. There was no doubt that the change was for the better, for Lily was a born dancer. But although she was now living with Katie, her personal habits did not change. She was in every hilarious party to which she had an invitation. She was drinking perhaps even more recklessly than before. Several times Katie saw her father and Lily having their drinks together, her father taking his drink in the grand manner of a gentleman giving a toast to a lady. And to add to Katie's difficulty was her distressing sense that she had no authority to try, by word or act, to restrain the behavior of the splendid Lily Spencer who had so recently lived in that splendid house just off Park Avenue.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

The weeks and months which followed were filled with worry for Katie O'Doone, though her work did not suffer because of her worry. She thought and worried about her father. She thought and worried about Lily Spencer. And, although she admitted that this was no affair of hers, she began to worry and think about Billy Gordon.

CHAPTER XIX

AT length the long road season of the 'original' company of 'Bubbles o' Laugh' was finished, and Katie, her father, and Lily returned to New York. Katie had had instructions while still upon the road to report to Feinham promptly, and on the day after her arrival Katie was in the office of her manager. Morris Blum was there, but after the welcome all the talking came from Feinham.

'Katie,' said the little manager, with the impressive manner of one doing a rare favor, 'I've been watching you and I've made up my mind to give you a great chance.'

'Yes?' asked Katie.

'And at the same time,' continued the important Feinham, 'to give Morris here his big chance.'

'No one deserves a big chance more than Morris!' ardently declared Katie. 'What is it?'

Feinham proceeded to tell her. But the truth, as Katie later learned, was very different from the story that was distorted to splendor by Feinham's self-appreciation. The great Feinham, despite his bluster of big words, was still a very small manager indeed as producing managers are rated in New York. He wanted to be a big manager, producing

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

big successes, a figure who had a legitimate right to strut along Broadway; but 'Bubbles o' Laugh,' beyond paying his family and business bills and taking care of some bad speculations, had merely earned him a small stake which he shrewdly calculated he must nurse along most carefully.

It was Morris Blum who, months before, had started Feinham upon his latest undertaking. Morris had approached Feinham with full knowledge of his man. The chief points of Morris's proposition were these: he, Morris, was to deliver a new musical comedy, writing all the music and lyrics and most of the book, and was to direct the production—all this at an extremely low figure. Katie O'Doone was to have the lead. The chief members of the touring company of 'Bubbles o' Laugh,' except its road star, were to be kept. Morris knew of the sets of a failure which could be bought for next to nothing, and could be repainted.

It was the cheapness of the whole proposition which had caught Feinham. He had been doubtful over Katie, and at first would not have her in so important a rôle; but in the end he was won to her by the thought of having a leading lady at some fraction of one hundred and fifty dollars a week, whereas he knew he'd have to pay an established musical-comedy star perhaps a thousand in money and would certainly have to spend all his agonizing time in keeping her doing the things which were required that she should do. He had told Morris to go ahead,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

and before 'Bubbles o' Laugh' had finished its road season Morris had completed his play.

It was the lead in this production that was the big chance the grandiose Feinham offered her. Katie gladly accepted it. When the interview was over, Morris followed her out.

'I'm ashamed, Katie, that there's not more money in this for you,' he apologized. 'You deserve a big raise. But I have no control over salaries — and Feinham has you under that old contract.'

'That's all right, Morris. Father and I can easily live on a hundred and fifty. My concern is whether I can make good in this new part.'

'That's another point, Katie — your part. I've built the entire show upon you. And about you. Understand? It's — well, it's a bit personal. You see, the show starts with you as a poor East Side kid — and you can guess the rest. I'm sorry if it hurts you, and I'll change it somehow if you say so.'

'That's all right, Morris.' She patted his shoulder as she might that of a brother. 'Anything you ever write about me will be all right with me.'

Katie could not have spoken more sincerely. She had a fierce pride of its sort, but there was nothing in her personal life of which she was ashamed. She would not have been shamed in the least if the whole world knew that not long since she had been a wash-erwoman and had done the wash of Mr. and Mrs. Kirschbaum and the numerous little Kirschbaums.

Rehearsals were not to begin for a month, and

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

that month she gave to her lessons with Mr. Gregory and to her suppling exercises. Lily spent July with friends; Madame Ravenal was in Paris; Billy Gordon was out of town for the summer; so except for her father and the care he required there were few personal relations to interfere with her routine. That was a hot July, but the busy Katie never felt the weather.

In August the company was assembled, and there followed a month of what seemed to be unceasing rehearsal. Then Katie decided that her rôle and the play would be improved if she had a smart gown for a change in the last act. By now she knew Feinham well enough to know that he would not supply the gown; so after consulting her savings she went over to Madame Ravenal's shop and was immediately admitted into the office she had once regarded as sacred and impenetrable. Madame Ravenal was now back; Katie had not seen her former employer for almost a year.

'So it's you again, Katie O'Doone,' Madame Ravenal snapped across her big glass-topped desk, in the brusque manner Katie knew so well. 'Sick of the stage and back after your old job, I suppose?'

Katie explained that she was merely back after a gown, and had the cash with which to pay for it, but wished Madame Ravenal's advice in its selection. Madame Ravenal questioned her sharply, and in the end Katie explained everything.

'So you're playing the lead in a show that opens

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

next Friday in that old dog-town of Stamford, and you need a gown,' Madame Ravenal crisply summed up. She touched one of the many ivory buttons on her desk. 'The State of Connecticut should abolish Stamford and all its other dog-towns as public nuisances!'

Just then Miss Grennell, the competent forelady, entered, obviously in quick response to the thrust upon the ivory button. 'Grennie, Katie O'Doone here wants a new gown. I want you to see that she gets the best in the shop and that she's charged at our cost price, and then I want you to take no money from her and never send her a dunning bill. Run along, Katie; you don't need my advice, for you know more about clothes than I do. Here's wishing you luck at Stamford.'

At the try-out at Stamford, Madame Ravenal occupied an inconspicuous seat. She spoke to no one except Morris Blum, and she made Morris promise to keep secret the fact that she had been present. She thought much throughout that night. She thought much the following morning, and carefully considered her bank account and that section of her books dealing with 'accounts payable.' Finally she reached for her telephone and spoke with Billy Gordon. Within thirty minutes Billy Gordon was seated in front of her glass-topped desk. He had just returned to the city after six weeks at Bar Harbor, and so was ignorant of much that had been happening.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Now Madame Ravenal had known Billy Gordon since he had been first introduced to long trousers; his mother had been one of her friends and best customers back in the days when she had been establishing herself. Furthermore, through some wireless system of her own, Madame Ravenal knew all the existing news and potential news of her world; although, unlike the newspapers, it was her policy never to publish her exclusive scandals and romances.

'Billy,' she began with her wonted brusqueness, 'last night I saw the try-out of a new show at Stamford. It was called "Song Time." It was certainly one of the worst shows I have ever seen. And perhaps, of its kind, it was one of the best shows I have ever seen.'

'Yes?' queried Billy politely. He had been given no hint of what lay behind Madame Ravenal's abrupt summons.

'And that good-bad show is coming into New York on a shoestring, and it's going to be a sure-fire flop. You never saw such cheap scenery, such cheap clothes, such cheap chorus girls. That show, as it stands, dies the night it opens in New York!'

'Yes?' repeated Billy Gordon. He still had no idea in what manner the 'flopping' of an unknown show might concern him.

'There are several persons in the affair that we both know,' continued Madame Ravenal. 'I'll just name Lily Spencer and Katie O'Doone. To hell with

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

the rest of them!' Madame Ravenal exploded with startling vehemence. 'Katie O'Doone is the one I'm thinking about! She's the damnedest worker I've ever known. And she's all soul — and she doesn't even know it! She thinks she's hard, but she's always thinking of her responsibility toward other people first, and thinking of herself last. She's crazy, Katie O'Doone's crazy, and I love her because she's crazy! — and, Billy, I can't bear it to have that child kill herself in New York with a cheap flop that's not her fault! Can you, Billy?'

'No!' Billy Gordon shouted at her in what turned out to be nothing more than a choking whisper.

'I want Katie O'Doone to have a real chance!' Madame Ravenal declared.

'So do I!' returned Billy Gordon. 'But — but what's to be done?'

'The answer is comparatively simple.' Hard old Madame Ravenal had recovered from one of her rare outbursts of emotion, and spoke with extreme practicality. 'Money and proper management are the answer. Everything else needed is already there. I'd take over the whole show myself, just for the sake of Katie O'Doone. But with me this has been a bad season, and I simply can't pull enough money out of my business. All the same, I'd love to get my hands on that show!'

'Just what would you do?'

'I'd buy the control away from Feinham, but leave him as the nominal producing manager, I

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

privately being the real boss. I'd keep four of the present principals — Katie O'Doone, her father, Lily Spencer and that Peter Romain she dances with — and I'd feature Katie O'Doone. All the rest of the cast I'd fire. The sets I'd chuck into an ash-can. Oh, yes, there's a goggled Jewish boy I'd keep. Simply could not get on without him. His name is Blum, and unless I miss my guess he's going to be another of these Irving Berlins who got their musical starts down in East Side saloons; perhaps he'll be far better than Irving Berlin. He knows his job, and I'd make most of my changes after asking his opinion. I'd get a first-class man to design new sets. And I'd personally dress the show, and dress it better than I have ever dressed a show in my life. My only public connection with the affair would be the usual credit notice on the programme about costumes by Madame Ravenal. The music, lyrics, libretto, and all that stuff would stand just about as they now are. There's my programme, Billy.'

'How much would it cost?' he promptly inquired.

'Around a hundred thousand to bring it into New York, buying things at the inside price as I can. I'm sure Feinham never has put in as much as ten thousand. I can furnish thirty or forty thousand of what's needed.'

'All right; here's the rest.' Billy drew out a pocket check-book, then hesitated. 'I'll go into it on the condition that my end is entirely in your name. I don't want any one to know that I'm in on this.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Especially I don't want Miss — I don't want Katie O'Doone ever to know.'

'I'll see that she never knows.' And indeed Katie never did know — that is, not until long, long after.

Within two hours Feinham was in the first of a series of conferences with lawyers and Madame Ravenal. He came out of these conferences with all his powers limited by a most binding contract. But he was a happy man, for his name was to be upon the bill-boards of New York as the manager of a first-class New York production. Madame Ravenal had assured him that she had no ambition to be known to be in the show business, and his contract guaranteed him sole credit as manager in all publicity that was paid for.

The ink was barely dry upon this contract when part of the programme outlined by Madame Ravenal to Billy Gordon began to go into effect with cataclysmic speed. 'Song Time' was taken off; all booking was cancelled; the cast was dismembered; designers were commissioned. The rebuilding proceeded more slowly and with the greatest care. The additional principals were selected, and a chorus that was a real chorus. Then once more rehearsals of 'Song Time' were begun under the direction of Morris Blum.

To Katie O'Doone the most amazing item of this amazing transformation was the fact that without her even making a hint for more money, her old con-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

tract was destroyed and her salary was raised to five hundred dollars a week. Her father was given an individual salary. Further, instead of the one good gown for which she had gone to Madame Ravenal, there were now being made for her a half-dozen gowns that were to be the finest costumes Madame Ravenal's shop could turn out.

To the staff of the production there was added a clever press agent, who had his definite orders. In the papers there began to appear little stories of a leading lady entirely unknown to New York who was to appear in 'Song Time,' the new musical play — Katie O'Doone, who some ten years before, when she was hardly more than twelve, had been a washerwoman down in Cherry Lane and had also been a street-singer. The little stories excited a doubting curiosity, if nothing else, and Katie O'Doone was a figure of intriguing interest before she had ever publicly stepped upon a real New York stage.

Katie did not resent this use made of her humble origin. But this publicity gave a keener edge to her constant fear that her father might learn the truth.

But Katie might have spared herself this new worry. Terry O'Doone regarded all this as just press-agent stuff; and he carefully kept to his part in their elaborate pretense of being real father and daughter. He even coached her in private on how to behave to maintain the illusion of being the real Katie O'Doone.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

At length, after a week of trying-out in near-by cities, 'Song Time' opened on a Tuesday night in New York at the Olympian. Madame Ravenal had not left this matter of the first audience entirely to chance and the clever press agent. She had sent out hundreds of personal letters to her most important patrons; to many others she had telephoned. A suggestion from Madame Ravenal was not a thing to be taken lightly by these ladies; so they came, and brought their husbands. The Olympian had never before housed a more distinguished first-night audience. Katie O'Doone, for her first appearance, could not have had a better chance — nor a chance which would test her more severely.

The opening set of the first act was a colorful reproduction of Cherry Lane, its true ugliness eliminated or sublimated; and the colorful, frolicsome tenement-dwellers who filled the street were the members of the chorus. After they had done their bit, a slight girlish figure appeared upon a stoop up stage, and stood wearily against the doorway rolling down her sleeves which had been rolled up to do the wash — just as Katie O'Doone had done it on that afternoon ten years before. Some one in the crowded street shouted to her for a song; not Peter Romain, for he had refused the rôle he had originally played in this same scene.

At that call for a song, the audience recognized the girl upon the stoop. She was that child washer-woman they had read of, the street-singer of Cherry

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Lane. At this moment Katie, indeed, looked no more than twelve, despite her trained one hundred and twenty pounds, and she looked wanly appealing in her faded, home-made dress — which faded dress, by the way, had been designed by New York's most famous modiste. Something about that child washer-woman, so wan, so obviously making a brave fight against poverty, gripped at the hearts of the audience before Katie had even opened her lips.

There came another call for a song — this time from Morris Blum; and presently Morris was standing at the bottom of the stoop, as he had done long ago, his violin beneath his chin. Morris would trust this bit of precious fiddling to no one else. The tenement-dwellers crowded about the stoop, Katie stepped forward in compliance, and amid the hush she sang her burlesques of those emotional ballads, 'In the Baggage Coach Ahead' and 'Only a Bird in a Gilded Cage' — only now her burlesque had a lightness, a daintiness it had lacked in the old days, and was therefore all the more effective. Then her manner changed, and with Morris playing the softest of obbligato, she sang 'The Last Rose of Summer' in her high, haunting, floating voice.

Onward from that little scene on the stoop, Katie O'Doone owned her audience.

There is no need to tell much more of what happened that night. All that is now part of theatrical history, and can be looked up by those interested in such matters. And there is no occasion here to out-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

line the plot of 'Song Time.' This present record is not, even in a minor degree, the history of 'Song Time'; it is the history of some dozen years in the off-stage life of Katie O'Doone, and of a few other people at points where their lives impinged upon hers.

But some purpose may be served in recalling a picture of Katie O'Doone as New York saw her that night. Just as part of her job, Katie had studied herself in order to discover in what direction lay her greatest effectiveness. She had made her decision, and the decision of Madame Ravenal and Morris Blum had been the same. All that was broadly humorous, all acrobatic dancing, all spectacular dancing — these were to belong to others. So on this night Katie O'Doone of Cherry Lane was all daintiness, all grace, all charm. Even in her grotesqueries which drew laughter, she drew as much admiration for her sheer grace. Not in a single movement was Katie ungraceful.

And Katie was beautiful. Of course she was helped tremendously by the gowns provided by the tough old mothering Madame Ravenal: ravishing gowns which made the smartest women out in front tingle with envy. There was no doubt of it: Katie O'Doone was radiantly, vitally, gorgeously beautiful.

When the final curtain fell there was no need for that audience to wait for the morning papers to know of a surety that a new star had come to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Broadway. Katie had to take calls that were seemingly endless; the audience was seemingly determined not to leave the theater. All stood beside their seats, shouting and beating their hands. That is, all stood up save one.

The single exception was a young man, alone, in a seat at the very back of the first balcony: a young man who happened to own most of the show, and whose money had given it its present chance. But he was not thinking of this money. He was thinking of Katie O'Doone. And he did not stand for the reason that he was too nerveless to stand. His hands were gripped between his knees; he could hardly breathe because of the choking gulps; tears ran silently down his face. He was seeing the rough, illiterate, little nobody he and Lily Spencer had run down years before — and at the same time he was seeing the indomitable, gloriously beautiful young woman down below. To him she was the most precious and desirable being in the world. And he could not have her! He could never have her!

The silent tears kept on running down Billy Gordon's cheeks.

CHAPTER XX

THE critical reviews of the following morning would have pleased Katie O'Doone even if she had been the most egocentric of stage stars. But such egotism Katie, for all her pride, very distinctly did not have. She was rather nonplussed by her success; but since her friends, particularly Madame Ravenal, had money invested in this affair, she was going to do her best to see that they did not lose. Her own rôle, with a wisdom far beyond her years, she regarded as just another job. Katie's every instinct impelled her to continue to make good on this new job. That was the way that Katie O'Doone was built.

The months that followed the historian and the reader may condense with benefit to both. The reader remembers that Katie O'Doone's play was the outstanding success of that year, and that Katie O'Doone's personality was the vivid, outstanding personality of that season. In all the smartest illustrated theatrical and country-club papers there were full-page pictures of Katie O'Doone — Katie O'Doone, the romantic girl-woman who had risen from obscure and dingy Cherry Lane to the brilliant heights of theatrical popularity. Full-page pictures of her even got into the society journals; although in the accompanying text there was usually a gracious,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

if condescending, allusion to the sordid fact that Katie O'Doone was, after all, a daughter of the slums. The implication in these fastidious journals was that Katie O'Doone was of no established family breed, was no thoroughbred; therefore, despite whatever might be her personal charm or merit, she really was not worth consideration except as a mere ephemeral figure of the stage, whose brightness the stage itself would probably soon forget.

Katie had a good memory. But if Katie ever read any of this gossip, it passed straight onward, through the intense consideration of others which had always marked her, back into the nothingness in which it had been born. She was attending to a big and concrete job. Such street-corner talk, however great the street-corner, did not matter.

But a thing which did matter to her was the new and genuine attitude of her father. At the end of the first performance Terry O'Doone was outside her dressing-room.

'Please, Miss O'Brien,' he began most courteously when they were alone, in what sounded like a prepared speech, 'I wish to say to you that I think this deception has gone too far. I am sober and I can now say that the greater success which I have recently won is entirely due to your pretending to be my daughter. Strange as it may seem in one who has fallen so ingloriously from that which he once loved as his true calling, that of a priest in the Holy Church, I have still a certain strain of honor. This

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

pretense cannot keep up longer. Pardon me, Miss O'Brien, but I am not longer going to keep up this pretense of being your father.'

He bowed very low. 'I hope I make myself clear, Miss O'Brien. You are really a great artist, and deserve the honor and emolument of such. I am just an ordinary performer and deserve only the recognition and payment of an ordinary but competent person. I do not deserve the additional honor, and the additional salary, which are coming to me as the father of the amazing Katie O'Doone. My sense of honor prevents me from taking money under false pretenses, Miss O'Brien.'

'Katie!' she interrupted sharply. 'You said you would always call me Katie! Call me Katie!' she added imperiously.

'If you command it,' he replied, again bowing low. 'I hate pretense, which in this case is all in my favor—but the top o' the mornin' to you, Katie O'Doone!'

'Listen,' cried Katie O'Doone, who was intuitively ever seeking the motives which might drive other people. 'Father, you may regard this as all fake. That's all right. But keep on calling me Katie, and I'll keep on calling you father. Even if you see it only as a joke, remember that it's a joke we started, and remember it's a joke which, without harm to any one, will help out the people backing the show. Can't you see that it's become an obligation?'

'I see, and it shall be as you wish, Miss O'Brien,'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

he responded. 'Any one who knows him will say that Terence O'Doone, whatever his shortcomings of long ago when he was almost a priest, was an honest man who tried to keep his obligations. I get your point, Miss O'Brien. You have tried to make this same point to me before. This is just an ordinary, accepted, theatrical device which may help the show. You are my daughter. I am your stage father. Good stage stuff, even if I do call you Katie O'Doone, which you're not. All right, Mary O'Brien — I shall keep on calling you Katie O'Doone.'

'That's correct — Katie O'Doone,' replied Katie in a light tone that held a little quaver. 'But there's another thing: We must keep on living together as father and daughter — as "The O'Doones." For the sake of the show,' she hastily added as further argument, 'and perhaps for the sake of later shows.'

He regarded her steadily — this amazing star, who had suddenly emerged from the tiny, blurred dots of the theatrical sky with such astounding first-magnitude brilliance; and then he responded with the graceful and gracious obeisance which is an essential of the Holy Church's training.

'Again just as you say, Katie O'Doone,' he said somewhat ornately. 'Yours is the honor. For the sake of stage business, since you request it, we are to continue our living together as "The O'Doones" — father and daughter.'

'Father O'Doone!' breathed Katie.

'But father only in the sense of the Church,' her

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

father politely reminded her. 'I have no blood child of my own — and for my sins, as I have told you, the Holy Church has never accepted me as one worthy to officiate as one of its Fathers.'

'Father O'Doone!' Katie whispered huskily, a wild dream suddenly born within her. 'I mean the words only in the sense of the Holy Church, and what you might have been! So I mean no profanity when I call you — call you — Father O'Doone!'

He patted her, as might a reverent priest, upon her black Irish hair. "'Tis a fine soul you have in you, Katie O'Doone — and 'tis my great sorrow that, not being wedded to the Church, so fine a girl as you are are not my own true daughter instead of my stage daughter. But trust Terence O'Doone for this: he'll keep the faith with you and the stage, and never was there a real daughter who will outwardly receive more fatherly deference and fatherly attention than will be your portion, make-believe Katie O'Doone though you be.'

Katie made no adequate reply. She didn't want to. She wanted something else far more. This little tricky device in her handling of the conversation with her father had kept for her exactly what she wanted for the present. She didn't mind the deception. She had gained her point: she was going to live on with her father as his daughter, and have the chance to take care of him. She was conscious of little concrete knowledge of love, but Katie O'Doone was wildly in love with her unbalanced father.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

That was exactly how Katie O'Doone gained her father's consent to remain publicly her father. It made a splendid newspaper story, good for columns and columns of space, this story of old-fashioned love between father and daughter. But Terry O'Doone, whenever he read a reference to this story on occasions when nearly sober, gnashed the very teeth of his soul. She was a fine Irish girl, this Mary O'Brien, and undoubtedly she had talent and a wise business head; but in a moment of his weakness she had trapped him, and trapped him to his own advantage; and he had a great personal pride, had Terence O'Doone.

It was perhaps never harder for Katie to keep within her self-ordained rôle of stage daughter. She loved her father. She loved her mother. During this new period of high fortune, Katie was forever thinking of her mother — just as she had thought of her mother, during the passing years, upon every step of the ascending stairway of life that she had climbed. If only her mother had lived to this day of undreamed-of fortune! How she would have taken care of her mother! Oh, how she would have taken care of her!

During this first season of her first real success, the world of fashion offered to open its doors to Katie, as it has the habit of doing to people of good presence who are publicly acclaimed as clever. No theatrical figure of recent years had been so welcome, as a novelty, to that circle which has usurped to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

itself the high and sacred right of being considered New York's innermost set. Katie had dozens of invitations in every mail. Through that young social expert, Lily Spencer, who had long been a fixture in the O'Doone ménage, Katie replied with most correct and charming regrets. In fact, Katie had no time for what she considered mere elaborate foolery. She was again upon her sixteen-hours-a-day schedule. There were her theatrical performances; there were her physical exercises which were to help her keep her girlish litheness and grace; there were her vocal studies with Mr. Gregory, which had again become a daily routine; there was the looking after her father, his laundry, his moderate drunkenness, his occasional public appearances at great restaurants with her.

But although Katie, during this pressing season of her first greatness, had no time to see those who would be her new friends, she had plenty of time for her friends of earlier days. She frequently saw her now somewhat awed friend, Amy Miller; and when in December Amy forever gave up the selling of laces at the ten-cent counter to become Mrs. James Harmon, Katie was Amy's bridesmaid.

It came about most naturally that that most puritanic, and most unadventurous, and most afraid-of-itself soul, Miss Kennedy, was a chief figure at Amy's wedding. And if Miss Kennedy here vanishes from this history of Katie O'Doone, it is not because Katie no longer saw her — in fact,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie was seeing her every few days — but because the timid and proper Miss Kennedy was no longer a factor in Katie's swift and intrepid development.

And of course Katie saw much of Madame Ravenal, whose moods abruptly changed from harshest dictatorism to an almost sobbing, slaving motherliness. At this time all of Katie's gowns, for the stage and for private wear, were being provided by Madame Ravenal; and whenever Katie came in to attempt to make payment upon account, that tough old dressmaking pirate burst into her most piratical profanity, and wound up by telling Katie to get out — but, before she ever let Katie go, the maneuvering old scalawag managed to get Katie to kiss her. That kiss of Katie O'Doone, right on the lips, was worth more to her than the payment of any bill Katie might ever run up.

This was, as will be remembered, the period when photographers camped outside Katie's door — and also those clever dry-point artists whose popular specialty was their transference to their public by a few swift and economical lines, of the reigning beauty of their day. One of these artist-beauty specialists discovered Katie's wide Irish eyes. Thereafter, it will be remembered, those large black eyes gained the popular name of 'The Eyes of O'Doone.'

And of course, in this season of Katie's first glory, she saw a great deal of Billy Gordon. He was an old friend, and Katie O'Doone simply could not help being friends with her old friends. She really

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

liked him, although she never had the time to analyze the quality and quantity of this liking. But in her innocence and her great human friendliness, she saw altogether too much of him, from the worldly point of view. Lily Spencer was the first to break the news of this new situation to her.

'Katie O'Doone, let me set you straight,' said Lily Spencer, putting down her emptied high-ball glass. They were both in their dressing-gowns in their apartment; following the success of 'Song Time' Katie, her father, and Lily had set up house-keeping together. 'You're better than I am, old sweetheart, but I know a darned sight better than you do how important mere talk may be. There's a lot of talk being bubbled over high-class tea-cups about you and Billy Gordon. Use your good old bean, Katie. Stop that chatter by telling Billy to take his toys elsewhere, or else come down to cases and marry the poor dear boy.'

Katie was on her feet before Lily's speech was half launched. Her posture, her every muscle, every tendon of her flexible young body, expressed an outraged fury.

'Me marry that loafer, Billy Gordon!' she cried. 'How often have I said that there is absolutely nothing doing in that line? I thought you were my friend, Lily Spencer, but for you to come to me with such a suggestion — Get out of my sight, get out of my sight — you — you —'

There followed an amazing explosion of violent

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

expletives. Before this annihilatory blast, Lily stuck fingers into her ears and fled wildly to her bedroom.

But Lily's suggestion was only the first and the mildest which Katie was to receive. The following afternoon — there was no *matinée* — she agreed, after much thought, to a much-urged appointment with Peter Romain. He came to her apartment, looking the smartest and handsomest young man in all of New York City. Trust the wide-awake Peter Romain for such details as make for a striking appearance.

'Katie,' said he — he knew her directness — 'suppose we cut out all preliminary sparring and go straight to the main bout. I want to make some money. You've always wanted to make money. Now I think we've got a situation in which we may join to make a big pot of money.'

'Shoot your whole works, Angel-Face,' she ordered, immediately suspicious. 'And shoot 'em quick!'

'I'll try to shoot 'em quick,' responded Peter Romain soothingly. 'You and I are in an — ah — situation which we may make of extreme advantage to both of us. I've often thought that together we might pull off something big. But never anything as big as this open-and-shut affair which is now before us, Katie. We've only got to reach out our hands to make it ours.'

'What is it that you're talking about, Peter Romain?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Chiefly about you, Katie,' Peter explained, appeasingly. 'Only incidentally am I talking about myself. But I'm perhaps the best friend of Billy Gordon. He trusts me and in all affairs he does just about what I put in his head. And then the second half of the lucky fall of the cards is that he's already in love with you, Katie. That Gordon family has oodles of dough. Let me handle the dough end, Katie — I know how — and we'll both come out with our millions. The greatest game ever, Katie!'

'Is that all of the game?' she asked in choking quiet.

'No. These are the details. Perhaps it may be the cleverest stunt for you to marry Billy Gordon — or we may fix up a fake marriage — or we may arrange an engagement of marriage, which agreement the family will buy back. Any way we may care to fix the game, there'll be millions in it for us. Old man Gordon will pay anything to free his son from Katie O'Doone, actress, formerly of Cherry Lane. It may be an old game, but I tell you that there's millions in it, Katie — millions!'

Like a galvanized fury she was on her feet and the two fists of Katie O'Doone, who had tried so hard to be a lady, drove at the eager and arguing face of Peter Romain, with all the drive of her one hundred and twenty pounds. Those unexpected blows brought blood. But, after the first moment, fighting Peter Romain was not at all like fighting her friend Lily Spencer. Peter was really powerful for one of

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

his weight, and he outweighed Katie by some thirty wiry pounds. Her wrists were instantly helpless prisoners in his two fiercely gripping hands, which in the gay and ultra-modern dalliance of the dance suggested everything that was joyous and alluring.

'If you want to be a little fool, and won't play the game I've suggested,' he snarled at her, 'then you're headed straight for hell!'

'All right!' she gasped.

His handsome face grew dark with a sudden idea. 'I see now why you wouldn't play the game with me, Katie O'Doone! You already had thought of the plan I suggested, only you want to play it alone! You think you're great, Katie O'Doone. But I know far more about you than you may think, and I'm not going to hesitate to use that knowledge when it may best serve me. So, Miss Katie O'Doone, to hell with you!'

At his last words he had bowed with cynical profundity, and had freed her wrists. Erect and tense, her black eyes afire, like a defiant tigress who has only a blinding ignorance of where she shall next strike, she breathed hotly at him:

'And as for you, Peter Romain — to hell with you!'

CHAPTER XXI

THE next few months in the life of Katie O'Doone were months so crowded with stimulating work that they offered no empty crevice of time into which a notable event could have thrust itself. The theater, her music lessons, her piano, her physical exercises that developed and kept her supple grace, her unceasing guardianship of her father — these filled her days.

During these passing months, forever striving as she was, Katie's work gained in finish and in poise, and the early impression she had made solidified into what promised to be a permanent reputation. Her vivid, unspoiled, untheatrical charm, and the appealing story of her childhood, which together had caused the hearts of her first audiences to open to her, were winning her an ever-increasing place in the hearts of the public and promised to keep her in those hearts for as long as she willed. She had won not alone popularity; she also had definitely won that love which is the world's spontaneous and eternal tribute to girlish youth that is valiant, modest, beautiful, and brilliant

Katie saw much of Billy Gordon during this period, but she did not allow him to break in upon the smooth flow of her routine. Along in February, however, there did come an interruption. Perhaps

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

this interruption may have been prompted and carefully instigated by the graceful, vindictive Peter Romain. On the other hand, Peter may really have had nothing to do with what happened. A vindictive Peter or no vindictive Peter, or whatever he may have done, the scene was written down in the annals of the future as an event which inevitably had to take place.

Katie was alone in the little apartment one afternoon when her maid — by now she had won to the position of having a maid — brought her an engraved card. Its embossment bore the name of Alexander Gordon. Billy's father! She remembered what Lily had told her of his pride and dominance and dreams. And now he was here to see her! What about?

She recovered her wits in a moment. 'Show the gentleman in, Claire,' she said, 'and you may have the rest of the afternoon off.'

The next moment Mr. Gordon's tall figure was bowing to her. 'Miss O'Doone, I presume?'

'Yes.'

She said no more. Standing very erect, she held her black eyes fixedly upon him. She had many times seen him at a distance, but never before face to face. Her instant impression of that face confirmed the impression of the man's soul she had carried with her these many years. It was a long, lean face with a jutting jaw — a cold mask of a face, with cold, steady, gray eyes, with cold, thin, tight lips.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

And in that face she saw a vast pride, a vast sense of superiority, in himself and his family strain — perhaps these qualities were so starkly manifest to her because she had long ago been told that they were in him. He was plainly a man of great passions, but his passions were plainly the servants of his cool will.

‘Please, Miss O’Doone, may I invite myself to have a chair?’ he presently inquired.

Her black eyes became hard. Her pride instantly guessed the reason for his presence — there could be only one possible reason — and she was instantly upon the offensive. She would not have been Katie O’Doone had she not flamingly resented his unspoken purpose, had the cold polish of his manner not provoked in her the defiant desire to seem maliciously crude in contrast, had she not swiftly struck out before she could be struck.

‘Sure invite yourself to a chair!’ she replied bluntly. ‘Invite yourself to several! And sit in all of them!’

He did not even blink at this studied insult. With his formal manner which was not lacking in a certain grace, he pushed forward a chair for her; but this she ignored and sat upon the sofa. He seated himself and regarded the stiffly erect girlish figure waiting for him to speak.

‘Please, may I smoke, Miss O’Doone?’

‘Sure. Anything except a pipe. I hate a pipe in the house.’

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

He lit a cigarette. 'I presume you know why I've called, Miss O'Doone?'

'Perhaps you're the new landlord and have come to raise the rent. Or perhaps you're peddling some nice new oil stock you've just had printed.'

Again he ignored her militant rudeness. 'I am here upon a much more personal matter. I might perhaps have left this more properly to my lawyers, but in so very intimate a matter I preferred to act myself if possible. The fewer that know of any action the better for all parties.'

'Go on,' she commanded.

'My business here is a somewhat delicate matter to broach. I have never had the pleasure of seeing you act, Miss O'Doone, but as far as I know you may be one of the finest young ladies upon our stage, with no scandal attached to your name!'

'No thanks to you!' she shot at him. 'And whether there's scandal or not, it's none of your business!'

'But excuse me, it may be some of my business. It so happens that my son has been paying you marked attention, and —'

'You stop right there!' she commanded sharply. 'If you've got anything to say, then cut out all your windy preliminaries! The success of a show depends largely upon getting off to a quick start. Start in the very middle of things, as a good show should start — or else don't ring up your curtain in my place!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Again he stared at her wrathful, alert independence — such an entirely different figure from the awed, embarrassed and perhaps frightened young woman he had expected to encounter. With an awkwardness, strange to Alexander Gordon, he bowed his acquiescence.

‘Then straight into the middle of things, as you suggest, Miss O’Doone. But such brevity necessitates an almost brutal frankness, and I hope you will forgive me if I am frank. The facts are obvious. You are a clever, promising actress — and perhaps more than that; but nevertheless you are fundamentally just Miss Katie O’Doone of Cherry Lane. There is much talk of an affair between you and my son. It is my desire to end that talk. Is that getting into the middle of things, Miss O’Doone?’

‘That’s better. Go on.’

‘I have come here to offer to pay you a reasonable amount, and in this case it may very well be a large amount, to help me end that talk by setting my son free.’

He had said the thing; from the first moment she had been right as to the purpose of his visit. She could barely keep her manner of rude self-possession.

‘I think I get you. You don’t exactly like the idea of having a crude ex-chorus girl as a daughter-in-law.’

‘I might not express myself so harshly, but that is my meaning.’

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Say, mister,' she drawled with dangerous blandness, 'doesn't it strike you that there's something awfully familiar in this scene between you and me? Haven't I seen just this scene in some play or other?'

'I do not think I quite understand you.'

'No matter. Yes, I guess I'm a crude ex-chorus girl all right.' The perverse and raging imp in her drove her on to be in full this man's conception of a chorus girl. 'But honest now, mister, I may be shy on family — I'm alley stuff, I gotta admit it — but since I been mixin' with real classy people I've learned myself a lot about English and manners. I'm a good looker, if I do have to be my own press agent, and I sure can wear clothes. I thought I was just about all right as a lady. For classy looks and in helping keep things lively at a party with wise cracks, I've got it all over those Fifth Avenue Janes. Honest, mister, I can't see why I wouldn't be all right as a daughter-in-law.'

'I have other ideas.'

'You mean you'd rather have a different sort of a girl?'

'Very different!'

'Oh, yes — I think I remember about you now.' She nodded as one who drags out a fact from memory's attic, and deliberately dusts it off. 'Been a lot in the papers about you. You're that bird that's nutty about good old blood. Cattle-raising is your pet, ain't it? You have nothing but the finest old-blood lady cows and the finest old-blood gentlemen

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

cows, and those are the only sort you ever let marry, and so the little baby cows keep on making the fine family blood finer and finer. Oh, ain't it wonderful!'

He could not restrain a mounting flush. 'That is all aside from our present discussion. If you please —'

'And I've heard another thing that's even more wonderful!' she gushed on. 'You feel about your own family just as you do about your cattle. Ain't that so? What you call pedigreed stock is just as necessary there. You gotta keep up the fine old family blood. I got you now, and I understand why you think I wouldn't do for your family stock-farm, and why you want for Billy a registered Jane whose pedigree —'

Mr. Gordon had come to his feet, his face more darkly crimson.

'Enough of that!' he commanded angrily. 'I did not come here to discuss my ideas or my family with you. And enough of your trying to act the vulgar chorus girl for my benefit. I know you are not that, or Lily Spencer would not be living here with you. Be yourself — that will probably be quite vulgar enough!'

'Thanks for the compliment of your last few words,' Katie murmured sweetly. At any rate, she had gotten under this man's proud skin.

'I have already stated the purpose of this call. There remains only the amount to be discussed. How much do you want?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'How much am I offered? It seems to me I should be offered a lot, when it's to save the noble Gordon corpuscles from the disaster of being contaminated with my plebeian blood-cells. Yes, my position is strong, yours very weak. What am I bid?'

'I thought we could settle this with money,' he said with grim satisfaction. 'Provided you give guarantees which will hold you to your promise, I am willing to go as high as two hundred thousand to have my son permanently cleared of this entanglement.'

'Is that all it's worth to you to save the family name and pedigree?' She shook her head. 'No-can-do. I'd be losing money at that price. Looks a much better proposition to me to marry Billy and his ten or twenty million.'

In thirty years of large affairs Mr. Gordon had not felt himself so helplessly balked, so openly flaunted. 'Is this an attempt to hold me up?' he demanded harshly.

Her appetite for the further goading of this man was overcome in a surge of new anger. She came to her feet and faced him, controlled no longer, but her whole being aflame with furious rage

'Now you listen to me, you old fool's son of a fool!' she lashed out at him. 'I tried to give you a straight line on yourself at the very start, and you couldn't see it! Don't you realize yet what an old-fashioned, absurd, and utterly stupid figure you are? The rich father with his money-bags, offering to buy the poor

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

girl off — why, your scene is so stale that you'd be howled off if you tried any such stuff on the stage! Oh, go write yourself a new act!"

He drew back an involuntary half pace before the attack of her fury. 'I am trying to do what is best for my son. I have found that direct measures are quickest and safest.'

'Oh, have you! Then listen to some more: even if your scene wasn't an old one, you couldn't buy me off, the great Mr. Gordon though you may be, with all your millions and all of Billy's! That's because I have nothing to sell for which you have the price!'

'I — I hardly understand, Miss O'Doone.'

'You would not understand, of course — being just a basement bargain hunter. So I'll have to explain. You tried to buy something from me, and you couldn't. Well, I'll never marry your precious son, or get him entangled in any of the usual embarrassing, expensive complications that you fear. And that promise is not going to cost your beloved pocketbook one thin dime! Are you beginning to understand me?'

'Miss O'Doone —' stammeringly began the astonished Mr. Gordon.

'And get this also!' the enraged Katie rushed on in her furious contempt. 'You've got a really fine son, a young man I really like, and a son with real stuff in him that any decent father ought to be proud of! But instead of coming to Katie O'Doone of Cherry Lane to save him with your check-book,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

why haven't you tried to save your son from the very beginning? Why haven't you tried to make a real man out of the splendid material you've had as clay in your hands? Why have you neglected him until just now? — and now think you can save him with your easy cheap dollars? Why, I think you are the coldest, dumbest, most useless proposition that ever called himself a father!

'Miss O'Doone, let me say —'

'Don't say it! You may have come here to talk, but instead you've got to listen! Now listen to this: I've known your son about three years —and, yes, he's asked me to marry him, and I've always turned him down. But my turning him down may not be wholly his fault. In all the time I've known him Billy Gordon has never done the real day's work of a real man. You've made him a high-class loafer, a high-class bum! Do you think I'd ever stoop to marry a bum? You've let me see how much you think of your family pride. Well, let me tell you I've got my own kind of pride. I'm too proud ever to marry a bum! And I'm too proud ever to marry into a family that thinks it's too good for me! That's all. Now, Mr. Gordon, you and all your money, get out of here quick, or I'll throw you out! Quick, or I'll throw you out!'

Now these last words were perhaps ludicrous to the extreme: considering the menacing Katie, with her one hundred and twenty pounds, and considering Mr. Gordon who carried his solid one hundred

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

and ninety pounds extremely well despite his years. Mr. Gordon had been through many delicate scenes; but, tried man of the world that he was, he recognized that he had never been through such a scene as this.

'Miss O'Doone,' he said, 'may I be permitted a few words by way of explanation?'

'If you have anything worth listening to, make it snappy!'

'I'll make it snappy as you request, Miss O'Doone. But first permit me to say that you are — it's awkward to say it — very superior in every way to what I expected to find.'

'But even so, not fit material for a daughter-in-law,' she shot at him. 'Is that all you wanted to say to me?'

'No. You may be entirely right in your charging me with being an unworthy father who has not given adequate attention to his worth-while son. But in my behalf, Miss O'Doone, you may recall some rather curious, difficult, and persistent mental results that followed the World's War. "Shell-shock" is, for example, the most popular phrase that is in use.'

'I follow you,' said Katie O'Doone. 'Go on.'

'The more common example, however,' Mr. Gordon continued, 'has been the young man who, after years of war's excitement, could not settle down to the routine of everyday work and everyday living. I may be entirely to blame regarding my son, Miss

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

O'Doone, but I honestly consider his to be an extreme case of this peculiar after-the-war malady of restlessness. I have tried to do the best by my son. But I have failed in every way.'

'You'd be willing to have him go to work, then?' demanded the keenly sensitized Katie. 'At work at anything?'

'Any real, honest, productive work that would make him really earn six or sixty or six hundred dollars a week,' promptly replied Mr. Gordon. 'It's the habit of concentrated work, without excitement, that the war has taken away and that I want to re-establish in the boy. Pardon me my father's vanity, but my son has ability enough. It's the habit of regular constructive work that I want in him, Miss O'Doone. If I could get back that initial energy which was in him before the war, I'd back my son against almost any young man of his years in all the world!'

Mr. Gordon's last sentences had been almost explosive in their vehemence. Practical Katie O'Doone was equally vehement in her response.

'Then why not shut off his money? Make him go to work at six dollars or sixty a week. You say he has the ability — no one doubts that!'

The elder Gordon threw up the hands of confessed defeat. 'Miss O'Doone,' he almost wailed, 'that boy's grandmother, who also was my own mother, was foolish enough to leave her only grandson, free of all legal entanglements, a sum which yields him

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

intact a personal income of around a half-million a year. I have no legal right whatever to interfere. I'd stop that income in a second if I had the power. But my son, wonderful as I think he is, has the money with which to be the rich bum and loafer which you have called him! — and I can't stop him! — I can't stop him!

Katie spoke impulsively, out of her heart — forgetting for this moment her anger at the father and thinking only of her friend Billy Gordon — spoke with no single thought of future complications, or what she might do.

'Mr. Gordon,' she cried, 'if we could get rid of his big inheritance, if we could make him work for his living, then we might make him into a real, honest-to-goodness man!'

He hesitated for the barest moment. She snapped him up sharply.

'Don't keep the idea in your head that I want to marry your son! I don't want to marry any one, and if ever I should want to marry, I shall probably be inclined to marry some man with real pep in him, which your son hasn't got!'

'I beg your pardon, Miss O'Doone. I was not just then thinking of marriage. I was thinking of your suggestion. Yes, if in some way his fortune could be taken from him, I think I'd be glad. It might be the making of him.'

She could not forget that this man had tendered her an insult. Therefore her pride demanded that

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

she keep the upper hand, be brusque, to the very last. She ostentatiously looked at her watch.

'Then if you are quite through, I'll ask you to excuse me. The laundry-woman is due this very minute.'

'Before I go, I wish to thank you. This interview has turned out happier than I had expected. I shall rely on your promise.'

'That promise is given, remember, not for your sake,' she returned with her militant coolness, 'but because I like myself. Good-afternoon.'

'Good-afternoon.'

He bowed and went out, with a bewildered look at this haughty ex-chorus girl who had turned the tables on him by scorning the very thought of him as a father-in-law.

CHAPTER XXII

KATIE made no mention of his father's call to Billy or to any one else. She continued to sting from the indignity she felt had been put upon her, and not unnaturally Billy was the target for much of her resentment. That startled young man could not understand, and sought enlightenment upon his offenses through humble questions. He received no answers. For some weeks he was a very puzzled and miserable young man.

If Katie had had at any time even lightly entertained the thought of some day marrying Billy, she had that idle thought no longer. That was all ended. Forever.

And then there came a development in the career of Katie O'Doone that for a period almost erased Billy from her mind. This development might likewise have been subtly engineered by the venomous Peter Romain. But, on the other hand, what happened may have been due merely to the insensate grinding of the wheels of life. Perhaps it was all merely a thing that was destined to happen, in some way, at some time.

This new development — instead of new, it could be more truly designated as the next phase of what had been a dominant problem of her life — had its unwarned beginning some two weeks after the visit

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

of Mr. Gordon. At the end of an evening performance, Katie had been detained on the stage by a consultation with Feinham and Morris Blum; her father had come to the theater that night almost too drunk to appear, and, furthermore, had brought liquor to his dressing-room and had been drinking there through the play and was now still drinking. It was a serious situation; they wanted to be considerate, but the show itself was endangered. She promised to take charge of her father as soon as she had changed and do her best to straighten him up, and was hurrying for her dressing-room when her maid stopped her with:

‘There’s a lady waiting to see you in your dressing-room. She didn’t give her name, and she asked to see you alone.’

‘That’s all right. I’ll not want you for a while.’

The maid was new, and Katie supposed that of course the lady was Madame Ravenal. But when she stepped into her dressing-room, she had one of the greatest surprises of her life. The lady waiting to see her was in a somber gown, wrinkled and worn despite obvious efforts to freshen its appearance. Her middle-aged face was flushed with drink, and in her rheumy eyes was a frightened, incredulous awe.

‘Katie,’ she quavered. ‘Is it really Katie?’

‘Aunt Maggie!’ For the moment Katie was too astounded to move.

‘And you’re not dead?’

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'No, Aunt Maggie. I just fooled you.'

'Katie, my own sweet darling!' sobbed Madame Minerva in a burst of maudlin affection. 'Sure it's you, Katie — sure it's my niece Katie O'Doone! And all these many years I've been thinking of you as a mouldering corpse at the bottom of the cold waters of the Hudson. I just read something in a paper, it was sent to me marked, about the O'Doones, father and daughter, being in the same play. I didn't think it could be so, but to-night I came with my own eyes to see. It's so, Katie O'Doone! You may now be a very fine lady, and you may disguise yourself with make-up and rich clothes — but you're the same girl of a Katie O'Doone who lived on my old houseboat for four years and really managed the old boat! And tried to cure me of the drink!'

Katie came out of her stupefied amazement. After all, she had liked her Aunt Maggie, and she was her father's sister. Impulsively she threw her arms about her aunt.

'Aunt Maggie!' she cried. 'I'm so glad to see you! You always wanted to be good to me and I always loved you!'

'Be still, my child — shut your dear face,' Aunt Maggie cried at her, contritely. 'I've never done a thing for you. And I've never been anything better than a drunken houseboat bum, telling fortunes for as much as I could soak the old and young fools for. I've always been an old fake — Katie darling!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Aunt Maggie!' cried Katie. 'I love you! Dear, dear Aunt Maggie!'

But Aunt Maggie in a sudden fit of near sobriety thrust Katie a full arm's length away. 'Katie O'Doone, don't be making a fool of yourself! I'm nobody at all — except as I may get my name in the scientific books as a case who drank herself to death in the shortest recorded time. I'm no good to you, child. I'm a bad one. I came to see you to-night only out of curiosity that you might possibly be the niece who once lived with me on my houseboat, and who I thought had committed suicide. I'm not one to be bothering the likes of you. So good-night and good-bye to you, Katie O'Doone — and good luck to you, Katie O'Doone! I'm going back to my houseboat.'

Katie clung desperately to her aunt, who sought to free herself and leave. 'Aunt Maggie,' she begged. 'Please don't go yet, Aunt Maggie!'

The chief reason for believing that the clever Peter Romain had his subtle hand in arranging this whole affair is the very concrete fact that while Katie and her Aunt Maggie were in each other's arms, and were crying out primitive words of affection, Terence O'Doone, having just been told that he was imperatively wanted by the star, knocked repeatedly, and hearing no answer he entered the room and witnessed this scene of unrepressed Irish affection. He stiffened at the astonishing sight. Morris Blum had not exaggerated his

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

drinking, and he was now in that mood of formal dignity and mighty self-importance to which he was prone when heavily in liquor.

'Maggie, you here!' he exclaimed; and then very stiffly: 'May I ask why my sister should be showing so much apparently real affection to a young lady who merely happens to be temporarily occupying the position of my stage daughter?'

'Terry O'Doone, you big fool you!' shouted Aunt Maggie. She saw her brother's grand manner of the condescending artist merely as a pose, and she was afire with sudden fury. 'Your stage daughter you call her! When it's your own blood daughter you have trying to help you with all the heart's love that's in her!'

'My stage daughter,' he haughtily corrected her, his drunken vanity inflated to its fullest. 'Her assuming the position of my real daughter has been merely a pretense we have used to further professional ends. She is a girl I picked up and trained and to whom I gave a chance.'

'You fool — shut the bragging mouth that shames you!' raged his sister. 'You have the nerve to say that to me! Just as if I didn't know Katie! Why, when you were in jail ten years ago for that big drunk, and when your grand wife died, and when Katie was only twelve, the little thing came to me to be taken care of — and the little thing spent four years on my houseboat in taking care of her old aunt! And I'm not so outrageously old at that,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

thirty-nine on my next birthday! And yet you call her your stage daughter — just a girl you picked up! And her your own real daughter!’

He gazed fixedly at his sister. But her words had not awakened belief.

‘You are apparently very drunk, Maggie, to talk like that,’ he reproved her. ‘My real daughter is dead. You told me so yourself, and you sent me the suicide letter she wrote.’

‘Listen to the man!’ raged Aunt Maggie. ‘Still denying his own daughter! As if Katie hadn’t lived with me for four years! As if we hadn’t just now been talking over old times together! Terry, quit playing the fool!’

He turned slowly and regarded Katie. He did not believe, and yet he was shaken.

‘Is there any truth in what my sister says?’

From the moment of her father’s entrance the dismayed Katie had known that her inspired, protective fiction, evolved that long-gone night when she had met her father at Rogano’s, was forever shattered. The moment she had long feared had come; the truth at last had to come out.

‘All that Aunt Maggie said is true,’ she whispered.

The color died out of his cheeks. A long moment passed before he spoke.

‘And you are truly my own daughter?’

‘Yes, Father.’ She saw he still could hardly credit it, and she added: ‘Besides Aunt Maggie, Morris Blum has known it all along, and Peter Ro-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

main. Don't you remember the last home we had with Mother — the one room at the top of a house down in Cherry Lane, with the kitchen stove that was propped up with bricks?'

Again there was a long silence.

'But your death?'

'That was just a trick. I — I wanted to run away and hide. I'll try to explain all that later.' She moved toward him suppliantly. 'Won't you forgive me, Father? And can't we — can't we — truly be to each other what we've pretended to be?'

'One moment!' He raised a peremptory hand: a flush of angered pride was creeping back into his face. 'If you are my own daughter and not the imitation I supposed you, then why did you pretend to be the imitation? Why should I, Terence O'Doone, be made the victim of all this foolery?'

'It's — it's hard to explain, Father,' stammered Katie. 'But I rather thought — just a blind idea, you know — that if you never knew I was your daughter, then I might — might — might help you more — might have more influence over you. I remembered about Mother — and — and I was afraid if you knew I was a woman relative I wouldn't have any influence with you. I admit that it was trickery, Father — but that was all the trickery there ever was to it.'

This explanation, given humbly and pleadingly, caused him to step back and draw himself more erect. If in this scene Terry O'Doone seemed to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

think first of his ego, his injured dignity, rather than of the finding of his supposedly dead daughter, it must be remembered that the usual action of whiskey upon him was the inflation of his grandiloquent self-esteem until all else was crowded out of his being.

'Then I am to understand,' he demanded darkly, 'that the sole idea behind all the deception practiced upon me has been the thought that you could boss me? You wanted to boss me!'

'Not boss you, Father. Help you.'

'Boss me!' he thundered. 'You tricked me thinking you could boss me! Me, Terence O'Doone!' His was the flamingly grand manner of the outrageously insulted grand gentleman. 'I'll have no woman tricking me and bossing me, whether she be my own sister or my own daughter! Such indignity as has been practiced upon me —'

And on he went. For the sake of Terry O'Doone what he said is best forgotten — he never remembered any of it — so it will not be here repeated. It will suffice to state that his temper and words were closely akin to those of that occasion at Rogano's when Katie had gone on and saved his act, and he had considered that she had maligned a great artist and had repudiated her. Again he finished with a magnificent repudiation — he was through with her forever — she would never see him more; and again the hurt artist strode out in rageful majesty. Katie tried to plead with him, to intercept him, but was swept aside.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'For God's sake,' whimpered Aunt Maggie when her brother had gone, 'Katie, can't you do something?'

Katie was already doing it. She reached for the house telephone and got her connection at once.

'Hello. That you, Morris? . . . Katie, yes. Morris, I think my father is due for one of his biggest drunks. He just left my dressing-room in a wild state. Pick him up and stick to him, and when he's in shape bring him back to me.'

'Surest thing you know,' responded the always reliable Morris Blum, and Katie hung up.

'Do you think — you'll ever get him back?' quavered Aunt Maggie.

'I'll get him back — yes. Sometime. But there's no telling what he'll think of me, or what can be done with him.'

Aunt Maggie subsided in limp contrition into a chair and began to weep and berate herself.

'To think, Katie, that I brought all this trouble on you! But — but, Katie, I really thought you were dead, and when I saw your name advertised in that marked piece of newspaper that was sent me, I simply had to come and see. I didn't have any idea of what you were trying to do with Terry. I honestly didn't know, Katie! And when I stumbled in here, and when I knew you for the Katie I'd thought dead, I just naturally made a mess of everything. I'm sorry, Katie! — as sorry as I can be!'

'Don't you worry too much, Aunt Maggie,' Katie

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

tried to cheer up her woe-begone visitor. 'Who knows — it may sometime all turn out to have been for the very best.'

'I hope so, but I don't see how, Katie,' blubbered Aunt Maggie. 'But — but I've learned one thing to-night, Katie. You are a fine young girl, and I'm just a drunken, worthless water-rat of a woman. That's true, Katie. And I'm never again going to make a mess of your life. You'll never see me again, Katie — never hear from me! And again I'm sorry for all the bad luck your family has brought you, and wishful for all the good luck you can bring yourself!'

'Now don't go away with such ideas!' cried Katie. 'It would never have happened, not any of it, except for the drink. Can't you, Aunt Maggie — can't you cut out the drink?'

'If I could do it for any one, I'd do it for you, child. But I know myself. I'm afraid I haven't the will. Good-bye.'

It had been a wreck of a night, but Katie kissed the affectionate cause of her trouble; and the rather bedraggled Aunt Maggie, refusing all assistance, and repeating her weeping avowals to keep forever out of Katie's life, at length made her way out of the theater and headed through the night for her bedraggled old houseboat.

CHAPTER XXIII

KATIE remained up all night waiting for the return of her father in charge of Morris. But Morris, though he had telephoned that he had Terry O'Doone in charge, did not come. But around mid-forenoon Madame Ravenal, who had learned of the scene in the dressing-room, did come. She raged at Katie for her idiotic persistence in trying to help a worthless father — she might have known that old rum-hound would have thrown her over exactly as he had done! And then, having completed her cursing, Madame Ravenal gathered Katie into her arms and wept over her.

Billy Gordon had come with Madame Ravenal. To him Madame Ravenal had told everything; told that she had been in the secret of Katie's true relationship to Terry O'Doone for almost three years. Now Billy regarded Katie with an awe that was close to tears.

'Katie,' he breathed, 'I think it's the most wonderful story I've ever heard — your living that way with your own father, and his never guessing, all so that you might help him!'

'It wasn't so very wonderful, since my idea didn't work,' she responded dully.

'And to think,' Billy marveled on, 'how I objected that night at Rogano's when you first told

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

him you wanted to be Katie O'Doone! And to think that during these years I never suspected the truth, even when I saw you doing everything a real daughter could do! Katie, I — I think you're even finer than I thought you!'

Katie did not reply. She was in no mood for praise. Lily had tried praise when she had learned the story during the night, and meeting with no response had turned to the affectionate, silent ministry with which she was still watchfully engaged.

Fortunately there was no *matinée* for that afternoon. Feinham came and suggested that Terry O'Doone's regular understudy sing his part that night, and Madame Ravenal backed Feinham up. Katie held out against them until six o'clock, when Morris Blum appeared with her father.

Terry O'Doone was not indignantly drunk in the grand manner of the previous night. He was helplessly drunk: intoxicated: in that strange but authentic state of intoxication where a man is all tears and filled with a black and muddled sense of his sins and the desire to confess those sins to all the world. He went on his knees, clutched Katie's skirt, and blasted his soul for being such an unworthy father to such a sweet and loving daughter. Also he apologized for the previous night and blessed her long-continued efforts to save his earthly life and his soul thereafter. That practically ended his germs of intelligence. In another minute he was snoring.

This was a crisis, and Katie was ever at her best in

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

a crisis that required practical measures. In half an hour, a doctor was in the apartment under orders to keep Terence O'Doone helpless until further notice, and Katie was on the way to the theater. The understudy was of course put in Terry O'Doone's part and sang and acted it very competently. In fact, the whole performance of that night went off with such smoothness that no one in the audience even suspected that anything untoward had happened.

The following morning Terry O'Doone's mind was clearer, and at that time took place the true scene of reunion between father and daughter. Terry O'Doone was awed and dumbfounded as he now more adequately realized the situation that had existed between himself and Katie, how great had been her love for him; he was wildly affectionate, wildly self-accusatory, and gave himself over to wild sobbing. He got from Katie the tale of her life until she had joined him: her running away to Aunt Maggie to escape an education, her being a washer-woman, then a salesgirl, then her struggle to gain the education she had scorned. And he learned for the first time the details of his wife's death.

He wept and wept, and his tears were as honest as the tears of semi-sobriety can ever be. He had been a brute, prodded on to his bestiality by the devil! But now he was going to be a man! He'd prove it! He gave his promise!

Katie wept with him, but she had had too much experience with her father to rely upon such pro-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

mises. And she knew that it was too much to expect of a man of such established habits to change himself solely by his unaided will.

Katie quickly realized that since her plan had failed for controlling and reforming her father through loving deception, some new plan had to be devised and put into effect. She also realized that she was faced with an acute problem that required time for its best consideration, and that while she considered she had to guard against the danger of her father, despite present good intentions, escaping her again. So in the theatrical programme she had inserted a slip to the effect that 'Mr. O'Doone will be temporarily absent from the cast owing to indisposition,' the understudy was regularly given the part; and Katie, as much as she loathed the stuff, kept her father in a constant state of anæsthesia with whiskey.

This much done, Katie set about that part of her thinking which required a greater care. She several times consulted Dr. Gilmore, one of the greatest medical authorities on inebriation and its cure in New York City; and he gave his advice and promised his best help in making arrangements. Also, remembering her father's early aspirations, she felt the need of a particular variety of human understanding and encouragement. Katie could be regarded as no more than technically a Catholic, since she had rarely had time to go to church; but she went to see Father Burke, Catholic chaplain of a

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

World War regiment of fighting Catholics, and Protestants, and Jews, and atheists, and thieves, and rogues, and gentlemen of lost souls — the respect and love of most of whom he had won by his sheer simplicity and humanity. To him Katie told her father's story and something of her own. At the first mention of the name of Terry O'Doone, the gray eyes of Father Burke showed a quick light, and he proceeded to question her closely about her father's early days; but at the time this had no significance for Katie. His kindness and his understanding of her father greatly helped her. She did not go too far in asking his practical advice; for by this time Katie was thinking of high-handed proceedings and she did not want to involve a priest of the faith in a possibly unethical performance that might go wrong with sensational consequences.

Katie felt the need of legal form behind her, so she next sought the lawyer who had drawn up her present theatrical contract and to him she told her requirements. He shook his head, but nevertheless he drew up for her two documents, almost identical in their wording. With these documents, and a notary in attendance, she returned to the apartment. Terence O'Doone was partially emerging from his drunken coma. She had carefully timed this affair so that he should have a little of his wits about him, but not too many wits.

'Father,' she beamed at him, 'I've the grandest good news for you!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Why, Katie — why, Katie,' he said wanly. 'That's fine of you. But I — well, I don't seem to be very well to-day.'

'Then my news will make you well!'

'What could such news be?'

'Father, you've been working under conditions where the best ability in you has never been recognized. I've just secured a document, which, in time, will secure for you that full recognition. Isn't that great? All you've got to do is to sign the document! And I've brought along a notary to witness your signature!'

'You mean a new contract?'

'You might call it a contract — yes.'

He showed no adequate enthusiasm. 'All right, Katie. I'll sign it if you say so.'

'Do you want to read it?' She held her breath.

'Have you read it?'

'Yes.'

'And it's all right?'

'I think it is.'

'Then I don't want to read it. I — I just don't feel like reading. Just show me where to sign.'

She showed him the place and he signed. Katie signed her own document, and both signatures were sealed and witnessed by the notary, who thereupon departed. Katie put the two documents safely away in her handbag.

'Father,' she said, 'I feel like a little ride, and I think that a bit of fresh air might do you good. I

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

have a car waiting down in the street. What do you say? Let's go.'

'Just as you like, Katie,' her father replied obediently.

The waiting car into which Katie led her father was a black limousine. Two very powerful-looking men occupied the driver's seat. Within a minute after he had settled upon the deep cushions Terry O'Doone was sound asleep, and he was still asleep when over an hour later the big car slipped through the suddenly opened gates of grilled steel-work set in an eight-foot wall of masonry spiked all along its top.

Katie aroused her father sufficiently to get him out of the car. He was dreamily conscious of pleasant greenery all around him, and of a large building in the near distance which must be the manor-house or castle of this estate. He was vaguely reminded of something. Oh, yes, the grand old songs of Erin, where gentlemen were always gallant and ladies always fair. Katie led him into what seemed a tasteful minor drawing-room, where she saw to it that he was comfortably seated.

'I'll have to leave you for a minute or two, Father. I hope you won't mind.'

'Not at all, Katie dear. The peace and good taste here all somehow remind me of the ancestral palace of the O'Doones back in dear old Ireland — of course, Katie, that is, if the O'Doones ever had a palace in Ireland.'

Katie gave her card to a quiet lady who appeared

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

out of a shadowy corner, and at once she was ushered through a door which immediately closed behind her. Katie found herself in a large office whose walls, where not cut by windows, were covered with filing-cabinets and shelves of learned-looking books. From a desk in the center a man past middle age arose respectfully, her card in his hands.

'Miss O'Doone?' he said, bowing slightly.

'Dr. Horton?' she inquired.

'Yes. Dr. Gilmore telephoned me to expect you. I presume that your father is with you?'

'He's in the next room.' Then a fresh fierceness of fear gripped her. 'Dr. Horton, are you certain you can cure him?'

'There is no such thing as certainty in cases of long-standing alcoholism,' he replied gravely. 'But this institution has had remarkably few cases of failure where the patient has really wished to be cured, and the mere fact that such an eminent specialist as Dr. Gilmore believes in our treatment and advised you to try it for your father should be of some assurance to you. An essential point in a cure is this: does the patient have remaining any fiber of character on which we can build? Does your father have any such remnants of which you can tell us, Miss O'Doone?'

Katie suddenly stiffened proudly. 'If it were not for the drink, my father would be a great man!' she declared.

Dr. Horton smiled slightly at this swift surge of

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

spirit in the daughter; perhaps his trained mind read some meaning in it. 'Then we may have good reason to hope, Miss O'Doone. Dr. Gilmore spoke of your bringing some papers, but he did not say what they were.'

'Dr. Gilmore did not know.'

Katie handed him the two documents which had been executed a few hours earlier. Dr. Horton glanced them through.

'Those are not exactly alike,' said Katie, 'and I want you to notice the difference.' She took back the paper her father had signed. 'I'll read you the two chief points of difference:

"I, Terence O'Doone, being of sound mind, fully aware of what is best for me, but being a victim of drink, do hereby, of my own free will, authorize my commitment to a reputable institution where I shall be treated," and so on. You get that. Now get this second point: "Furthermore, realizing my craving, and realizing that this craving may assert itself at some time during the process of my cure, and realizing that I may seek to invalidate this document or to escape the appointed institution in my desire to satisfy my craving, I hereby state it as my inviolate wish and command that most cautious guard be kept over me, and that I shall not be released from the appointed institution until after a group of specialists, selected by said institution, shall have declared me thoroughly and permanently cured." There, Dr. Horton, does that cover the matter?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'It certainly does. Unfortunately, however, it is not legal.'

'Not legal?'

'Ours is a strictly private institution and a person cannot be legally committed to such. The only value of that document is in its possible influence upon your father. If he believes in its power, it may help greatly in restraining him during the early stages of treatment.'

'Then use it for that, please! It may help!'

'Very well. I'll show it to your father, but I cannot tell him it has any force. Now I shall require the signature of both of you to our regular forms.'

Katie signed the required document, and accompanied by Dr. Horton went out to her father. He had fallen asleep in the chair in which she had left him. She roused him sufficiently to get his signature, then returned to the office where she made out her check in advance payment of a month's treatment.

'Watch over him, Dr. Horton,' she quavered at the last. 'But — but please don't let your people be too harsh with him. He's — he's all I've got. Thank you very much, sir; and good-bye to you, sir.'

Dr. Horton huskily stammered something to the effect of 'Thanking you, Miss O'Doone,' and ushered her back into the reception-room. Her father was again sound asleep. She crossed, dropped to her knees, and clutched him tensely. This was good-bye — and perhaps good-bye forever.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

The fierceness of her grip stirred him from his slumber.

'Time for curtain yet, Katie?' he murmured.

'Not yet, Father.'

'Then I'm feeling a bit sleepy, Katie. Mind if I take a little nap — right here — till it's time — for the curtain — to go up?'

Katie arose.

'Stay right here, Father.' She had never had greater difficulty in keeping her voice steady, and keeping a sudden thrill out of it. 'And Father — when the curtain does go up, I hope — oh, I do so hope! — that for you it will be a big, big curtain!'

That night Katie O'Doone gave what till then was the best performance of her career. She was a radiant sprite, bubbling with humor and infectious laughter. The essence of her charm had never gone over the footlights more effectively. The fifteen hundred persons in the audience remarked to themselves that here was one girl in the world who had never a care.

Billy Gordon asked her to supper. This she refused, but she let him drive her straight to her apartment; and she let him come up, until Lily Spencer should appear. Of course Billy had never an idea of all Katie had been through that day. He was still upon the rapturous heights to which her performance had lifted him, and he forgot all else in his love for his enchantress. He proposed again. Never had he done a thing more ill-advised. Katie had

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

carried on as long as she could, and it was poor Billy Gordon's luck that he should be her victim, and her victim when her every nerve was so taut and raw that she could spare no one.

'Marry you?' she cried. 'I'm tired of telling you I'll not marry you!'

'But why not?' persisted this ill-starred young man.

Katie was relentless. 'I've already told your father my reasons. Ask him.'

'You've seen my father?' gasped Billy. This was his first hint of his father's call on Katie.

'No. Your father has been to see me.'

'But — but what for?'

'The usual reason. What other reason does a rich and proud father come to see a show-girl about, when he's got a fool of a son tagging after her?'

'Katie, you can't — can't mean it? He didn't offer — offer —'

'Offer to buy me off? That's exactly what he came for. But he didn't get very far with that. I'll say this for your father. You've got a better father than your father has a son. And I gave him my promise never to marry you, and I didn't charge him a nickel for the promise either!'

Billy Gordon's brains were whirling with the suddenness of all this. 'But, Katie — Katie — what did you tell him?'

'I told him you were a rich bum, and that I was never going to marry a rich bum. That's final

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

enough, isn't it? If it isn't, I'll make it more final. I never want to see you again. So run along with you now; and if at any future time you feel inclined to send me flowers, you'll save me a lot of trouble by putting them in the ash-can yourself. Good-night!'

If Billy Gordon had been an actor in old-fashioned melodrama, right here is the point where he certainly would have pulled at his hair and called down curses upon all womankind. But being just a modern young gentleman, very much in love, he merely gazed palely a moment longer at the tense girlish figure who taunted him; then, seemingly somewhat shrunken as to size, he turned and quietly went out.

Katie and Lily had separate bedrooms in the little apartment. When half an hour later Lily came in, she heard choking cries coming from Katie's room. She listened for a space. She had never before heard Katie cry; she knew of Katie's great pride. For a moment she stood still, at a loss what to do. Then acting wholly upon an intuition, that was far greater than the greatest wisdom, she quickly changed into her nightgown, turned out all lights, slipped into Katie's bedroom and silently slipped into Katie's bed and put her arms around Katie's quivering figure. No questions were asked; not a word was spoken. After a time Katie's sobs grew less convulsive; after a time they subsided altogether, her body relaxed, her breath came easily; and presently Katie was sound asleep in the arms of her friend, like the child that she was.

CHAPTER XXIV

THERE was no publicity of any kind arising from Katie's kidnaping of her father. Only a very few knew all the facts, and these few were either her closest friends or close-lipped men of science. But to cover up her father's disappearance, Katie contrived that the press agent of the company should send out a theatrical note to the effect that Terence O'Doone had withdrawn from 'Song Time' to sing a more important rôle in a new musical play that was to be given a long and thorough try-out on the road before being brought into New York the following autumn.

Katie suffered much during the days and weeks which followed, but her friends, her public, had never a suspicion of the accusing pain which tore her heart. Now that the thing was done, she was assailed with doubts as to whether her course with her father had been wise, humane, excusable on any grounds. At times it seemed to her indefensible, and her prosecuting doubts denounced her as hard, arbitrary, unloving. She wavered; was frequently on the point of rushing out to her father and undoing her act. Only by the barest margin did her original purpose outweigh these new impulses, and did she determine to await the outcome of her experiment.

And Katie suffered much these days because of

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Billy Gordon. She was ever living through again his last proposal, when she had lashed him across the face with her bitterest words. She saw him occasionally now, and his white, strained face accused her with its all-too-obvious pain. She had been mercilessly brutal, she now realized, and the warm heart in her urged her to try to soften her impetuous refusal. But what could she say that would help, unless she said more than she was willing to express in deed? She liked him more than any other man, but she was not willing to marry him. Her words to him had been crudely stark, but they had fitted him.

So Katie said nothing to lessen Billy Gordon's hurt. But often she reflected deeply upon one phase of her talk with Billy's father when she had given her word not to marry Billy. If Billy's fortune could somehow be taken from him, then sheer necessity might drive him to work and develop the splendid manhood that indubitably was in him. If only Billy were somehow to lose his money!

And Katie, instinctively watchful of the best interests of her friends, had yet another cause for worry. This was Lily Spencer. It seemed to her that the popular dancing team of Romain and Spencer had for some time been tending toward something closer than a professional relationship. Certainly Peter was showing Lily gallant attentions, and Lily was receiving these with undeniable pleasure. Katie was prompted to give her friend sharp warning

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

against Peter, but she knew Lily's high spirit, so for the present she watched and held her peace.

Katie's nearest substitute for happiness came in the forgetfulness won by unrelenting absorption in her work. There was no let-up in that daily routine which was the source of much of the pleasure she gave others, and which was refining and developing her. On the stage she was, if anything, more gracious, more carefree, more radiant with infectious smiles than ever before; and the vogue of Katie O'Doone increased with every performance. It came to be accepted that here was one of those rare, delightful, established personalities of the stage who are destined to be remembered with affection even in that distant day when the stage sees them no more.

It was during this period that Morris Blum gave a further fillip to Katie's vogue. Anonymously he wrote and published a song called 'The Heart of Katie O'Doone.' The song instantly became the musical hit of the season, was arranged for dancing, and phonograph and radio sang its delightful invitation to rhythmic feet, and extended Katie's glamorous popularity into far regions where her name had not hitherto penetrated. She was Fortune's best-loved child — or so thought the world.

It had been Katie's intention, when she had kissed her drink-fogged father good-bye at Dr. Horton's, not to try to see him again until he came out either cured or an admittedly hopeless case.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

This decision had been unconsciously based largely upon the fear of her father's wrath at her for the stratagem used upon him. For three weeks Katie held to this decision, supported the while by daily calling up Dr. Horton and hearing his assurance that her father was doing as well as could be expected. But at the beginning of the fourth week this resolution collapsed before the fierce hunger of her love. She drove wildly out to Dr. Horton's. Beside her in the car sat Father Burke, that priest to men of all creeds, and especially priest to all actor folk — for New York's theater district and the boundaries of his parish were roughly the same. She had felt the need of possible help with her father, and her sure instinct had caused her to turn to this stalwart, kindly man of the Church.

Her father was in a cottage that housed four patients. She left Father Burke in a little sitting-room and followed Dr. Horton. At her father's door she faltered, suddenly weak with fear and suspense. But she forced herself to enter. There was a male attendant in the room, but after a few whispered words he withdrew and after him went Dr. Horton.

Her father lay on a narrow cot, tightly swathed like a mummy, only his face showing. She was startled at the change in that once full and ruddy face. It was wasted and of a greenish pallor, and was lined with suffering. His eyes were closed and the lids seemed almost translucent.

'Father!' she breathed chokingly.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

The eyes came open, and blinked at her. 'Katie!' he murmured. Then his eyes filled with the suffering and accusation of the addict long denied his accustomed solace.

'I suppose you've come to gloat over the fine thing you have done to your father!' His splendid voice was now weirdly thin and husky.

'Forgive me, Father,' she quavered, sinking into a chair beside his head. 'It's — it was because I loved you so much — you are all I have — and I wanted you to be — to be — be splendid,' she finished lamely.

'Splendid!' he scoffed querulously. 'Well, I look splendid, don't I? You've come to take me away?'

She shook her head.

'Then, for the love of God, give me a drink!' he groaned. 'They haven't given me a drop of whiskey since the first week when they said they were tapering me off. Two long weeks without a drink! Katie — if you love me as you say — you'll give me a drink!'

'I have nothing to give you, Father.'

'If you cared for me you'd have brought something,' he accused bitterly. 'Oh, if you only knew how I've suffered!'

'Has it been so very bad, Father?'

'Bad? Child, it's been the devil's own hell! I'm in this cold-pack a third of the time: wet sheets wound tight about me, and over the cotton sheets is this rubber sheet. I can't move! And when I'm

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

not dressed like a drowned mummy, they put me in a hot cabinet where I sweat my very soul out! And my appetite is all gone since they took away the drink, and my nerves are as crazy as the strings of a gypsy's fiddle. Bad is it I am, you ask? If you ever suffer like this, it'll be no need you'll have for purgatory!'

He looked his words. Katie could almost hear his every nerve and cell cry their agonizing protest against the deprivation of that stimulant in which they had laved for over a quarter of a century.

'But you'll soon begin to feel better,' Katie tried to encourage him.

'If I ever do, this place will never hold me! I'll be going where I can get a drink — mark that!'

'You really mean it, Father?'

'Of course I do!' he stormed weakly. 'You got me here by a trick, didn't you? I didn't know what that lawyer's paper was I signed, did I? It had me fooled for a while. I thought I didn't dare leave. I tell you if it hadn't been for that tricky paper I'd never have stayed here!'

'I'm sorry about the trick, Father.'

'And a lot your sorrow lessens what I've been through! Those people started this treatment before I knew what it was all about, and when my head cleared I was too weak to do anything. I'm just standing this till I get back my strength — then I go! You know I can't be kept here unless I want to stay. It won't be legal!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Katie knew too well it would not be legal. 'I was hoping when I brought you here,' she explained falteringly, 'that after the treatment was started you'd be willing, entirely of your own accord, to stick the thing out until you were cured.'

'Well, I'm not willing! I'm not a man to be tricked by any woman, and especially not by my own daughter!'

Her heart sank. She felt that she had practically failed in her splendidly desperate plan, and furthermore had permanently alienated her father. Further argument or pleading was useless, so she quietly rose.

'I brought some one to visit you,' she said, and went out.

In a moment she ushered in Father Burke. Terry O'Doone glanced indifferently at the priest, then suddenly his eyes bulged staringly and his mouth fell loosely agape.

'Fath — Father Burke!' he gasped in amazement.

Father Burke advanced and gazed steadily down into the wasted face.

'Yes, it's the same Terry O'Doone,' he slowly murmured to himself; and then: 'Well, well, Terry! It's glad I am to see you again!'

'And I — to see you.'

'Then why haven't you looked me up all these years? You must have known I was in New York.'

'Yes, but — but —' His voice broke. 'I was ashamed, Father.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Ashamed to call on an old friend? That's not like the old Terry O'Doone.'

'Father Burke — you really know my father?' breathlessly put in the astonished Katie.

'We were lads together, my daughter — in the same class studying for the priesthood. And in those days Terry O'Doone was far cleverer at the books than I was. He used to help me, and he had the makings of a far better priest than I am.'

'No, no, Father!' protested Terry O'Doone.

Katie stared from one face to the other. She could not speak.

'My daughter,' Father Burke gently said to her, 'would you be willing to leave two old friends alone for a few moments?'

She slipped out and waited in the little sitting-room. For a time she sat awed and bewildered by the almost miraculous fact that this splendid, kindly priest and her father had started life together, had been friends and equals. And yet, as she thought, she realized that after all there was nothing at all miraculous in two Irish youths, of the same city and the same age and the same bent, being mates in the same school.

Presently Father Burke signaled her to enter alone. She saw that the querulous, defiant look had gone from her father's face. It was twitching and the eyes glinted with tears.

'Katie, dear,' he said tremulously, 'Katie — you're a better daughter than I —'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Father!' she cried, and dropped on her knees at his head. 'You forgive me?'

'Forgive you? Why, I — I thank you, Katie! I thank you. I'm no good, but —'

She stopped his words with wild kisses.

'I'm no good, Katie,' his quavering voice continued after a moment, 'but I'm going to stay on here just as you want me to. And I'm going to do my best. Though — though I'm not saying I'm man enough to make good. I'm a poor bit of clay, Katie. But I'll try, Katie — I'll try!'

'Father — oh, Father!'

'And if I don't make good, at least you've done your best. I've got a wonderful daughter, Katie, and I'm proud of her!'

She was clutching his rubber-encased shoulders and pressing her cheek against his, when Father Burke entered and gently led her out to their car. 'Have faith, my child, and pray,' his soft voice urged. 'Your father may measure up to your dreams. He has quality. I know.' And on the ride back to the city he calmed and reassured her by telling stories of the lovable, brilliant Terry O'Doone of twenty-five years before.

CHAPTER XXV

KATIE was greatly exalted by the memory of that afternoon, and by the thrilling hope that her attempt at reshaping another life into its finer self might turn out happily. That hope kept her in high spirits for a week, then she went out to the sanitarium again. She left with her spirits yet higher, for her father's courage had held and he had been able to smile at her. Father Burke had been out to see him during the week, and the visit of his boyhood friend had evidently had much to do with Terry O'Doone's determination.

Thereafter he showed improvement at Katie's every weekly visit.

It had been February when Katie had taken him to the sanitarium. Three months passed, and they were the richest months Katie had ever known. She was happy in her work, and happy in her hope for her father. In her happiness she had a thrilling sense of growth; she loved all the world; and all the world seemed to be rejoicing with her.

Early in May, when at the sanitarium, Katie was informed by Dr. Horton that she could remove her father the following week. Terry O'Doone was happy over the news that he was to reënter the world; and he was also filled with wonderment and

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

suspense, for his was to be the experience of reëntering the world a different man. Katie believed that it was thoughts of being a new man living a new life that caused him to show no excitement when she spoke of his being restored to his old rôle or being given a better one, and of his singing better than he had ever sung before.

Father Burke was also a visitor that same day, and a second time Katie rode back to the city with him.

‘It’s a fine piece of work you’ve done there, my daughter, and one you should be forever proud of,’ he said.

‘I’m sure I’ll never do anything else, Father, that will make me so happy! But don’t forget how much we both owe you!’

‘I did only a little, but I’m glad to have had the privilege of doing that little. We’ve had some talks together, your father and I. When he comes back into the world again, my child, I think that you and I will in time have reason to be very proud of him.’

‘Oh, I know his voice will be better than ever! I’ve spoken to the management; he’s to have his old part back whenever he wants it, and Morris Blum has written a new song especially for him. I know he’ll love that song, and he’ll sing it beautifully!’

Father Burke was pleasantly interested over this prospect, but he showed no more enthusiasm over the return to the stage than had Terry O’Doone. However, Katie was herself just then too excited by

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

her happiness to note any lack of excitement in others.

In these exalted spirits Katie reached home. She wished the best for all her friends. In this happy and protective mood it was only natural that a little off-stage scene that same night between Lily and Peter Romain should stir her to uneasiness, and only natural that two hours later, when she and Lily were undressing in their apartment, she should attempt a warning.

They were both in Katie's bedroom and were lightly chatting as they brushed out their hair, when Katie ventured in a more sober tone: 'Lily, do you trust me? Do you believe I'm a good friend?'

'Of course, old dear. But, prithee, why so glum, fair maiden — prithee, why so glum?'

'I'm thinking about you. And Peter Romain.'

'About Peter and me!' Lily moved from the bed on which she had been sitting to a chair beside the dressing-table so that she could see Katie's face. 'What about us?'

'You don't mind if I'm inquisitive? And a bit — a bit frank?'

'I'd be a fine piece of gratitude if I minded! Go on! What is it?'

'I've noticed that you and Peter have been very friendly of late. Just how friendly, Lily?'

'Aren't dancing partners all the better dancers if they are friends?' Lily countered.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Mind saying just how friendly, Lily?'

Lily hesitated and colored slightly; then she said in a tone of slight defiance:

'Peter Romain has asked me to marry him.'

'Mind telling me what your answer was?'

'I haven't given it yet.'

'Do you know what it will be?'

'I think it's going to be yes. I like Peter better than any man I've ever known. He's clever, and certainly he's most fascinating.'

'Oh, Peter's fascinating — when he wants to be. Lily, there's something I perhaps should have told you long ago — only there seemed no reason to interfere with Peter's pretenses so long as they really hurt no one and he behaved. Lily, Peter is not of noble Italian birth as he claims. His real name is Pietro Romano and his father is a cobbler down in Cherry Lane. I've known Peter since I was a little girl; we used to live in the same tenement. Ask Morris Blum.'

But Lily was not the least taken aback by this disclosure. 'Peter told me all that long ago. What's wrong with his little fib? It's no worse than the usual run of press-agent yarns. Peter said he made the story up solely for business reasons: as an Italian nobleman he believed he'd be worth more to himself as a dancer.'

Yes, Peter was undoubtedly clever, Katie again had to admit. His was a plausible story; but she knew that he would have confessed no part of the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

truth had fate not directed his path across hers and Morris Blum's.

'Did Peter tell you anything else about himself?' Katie quietly pressed on.

'What else is there to tell?'

'That he is a very finished crook. That even as a boy he was a professional pickpocket.'

'What!' cried Lily, half rising. 'I don't believe it!'

'I know, Lily. When I was only twelve Peter tried to get me to join him in picking pockets.'

'I don't believe it!'

'Ask Morris Blum.'

'I don't believe it!' Lily reiterated.

Katie saw that it was useless to try to press this charge home with the aroused Lily. So momentarily she dropped it.

'When Peter proposed did he suggest any plans for the two of you?'

'Yes. Peter thinks that together, with our reputations, we might start one of these smart after-theater dance clubs, where our dancing would be the big feature and where we'd soon be in the way of making our fortunes.'

'Has Peter told you that he already has almost exactly that same kind of dance club?' quietly asked Katie. 'Only much smaller? And much more private?'

'No! And I'm sure he hasn't one!'

'Peter has. I learned of it definitely only a few days ago. He has two very elaborate and very private apartments which he can throw together.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

He has a few polished-looking men who work with him; when they are present, he introduces them as his friends and guests. Rich and foolish women who are otherwise respectable are crazy about Peter's dancing. He has only to suggest an hour or so of midnight dancing to such women, and they come. Peter has plenty of things to drink; also he knows how to doctor a drink so that the rich and respectable lady never suspects him while drinking. There's Peter Romain's lay-out. You can guess for yourself all the possibilities of that brilliant trap.'

'I don't believe it!' Lily cried again. 'Not a word of it!'

'I know it's all true, Lily,' Katie went firmly on. 'I know Peter — his mind — his aims. And, Lily — Peter's chief aim in asking you to marry him is not to get a wife. It's to get a woman partner in his schemes. Just as Peter once saw me in a small way, he now sees you in a big way. If he can connect you with himself, and deftly shape you to his purposes, he sees in you the most brilliant and most alluring and most suspicion-allaying partner a clever scoundrel ever had. He sees no scheme too big or too daring if he has you to fit into it. Blackmail is Peter Romain's real game, Lily! Big blackmail!'

Lily Spencer was now on her feet, trembling with anger. 'Lies — all lies!' she cried. 'Peter Romain is not that kind! I believe in him, and just to show you what I think of your attack on him I'm going to marry him!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Don't-do it, Lily! You'll always regret it. Believe me, Lily, I know exactly what I'm talking about. Why, only a few months ago Peter came to me with something equivalent to a blackmailing proposition.'

'What did Peter say?'

'He said Billy Gordon trusted him so much that he could lead Billy around by the nose. He suggested two plans. The first was to involve Billy in some scandalous situation with me, and then to squeeze hush-money out of him. The second plan was to lure Billy into a real marriage with me, and then force a big price out of him for his freedom. In either case Peter expected half, and of course if I were to choose to remain married, Peter would try to collect from me the rest of my life.'

'I don't believe that either!' exclaimed the furious Lily. 'You must have misunderstood him! And now you listen to me, Katie O'Doone: I think it would have been a mighty fine thing for everybody concerned if Peter Romain really had lured or tricked Billy Gordon into marrying you!'

Lily's tone and attitude begot an instant fear. 'What do you mean, Lily?'

Lily delivered each of her next words as if it were a blow. She wanted to hurt as she had been hurt.

'I saw Billy Gordon this afternoon. He told me he was engaged to Madelaine Forsythe!'

It was Katie's turn to give a choking gasp. 'You — you mean that, Lily?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'I certainly do!' was the grim reply. 'The engagement's a secret as yet. Billy told me because I'm such an old friend. The thing's brand-new, he only proposed last night, and the engagement won't be made public at present — perhaps the announcement will not come until their marriage, which may be almost any day. Billy doesn't want a fuss, Madeline evidently wants the thing settled quick while she's sure of him, so the wedding is to be just the bare legal ceremony.'

Katie was gripped with a dizzy sickness, and her face grew white and strained. No longer had she a thought of Peter Romain.

'And what's more,' Lily continued, 'Billy wasn't the most eager groom-to-be I ever saw. In fact he said that while he supposed he should be happy he wasn't feeling any of the happiness proper to the situation. He said he guessed I understood the reason for his feeling. He said that perhaps he'd been a bit reckless, but that he saw absolutely no hope for himself with another girl he had several times proposed to.'

'Did he really say that, Lily?'

'Not in speech — of course not. But he said it in his every act, and his every look, and every word of what I said he said is the essential truth. And now, Katie O'Doone,' Lily stormed accusingly on, 'you yourself are responsible for throwing Billy Gordon into Madeline Forsythe's arms! You could have saved him — but you wouldn't! Billy is just one more case of a disappointed man naturally rebound-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

ing from one woman to another woman. And at that I'll bet Billy didn't want to propose. I'll bet that Madelaine Forsythe saw that her best time had come and she shrewdly pushed Billy into a proposal! You just remember —'

'Stop, Lily! Please stop!'

'I'll not stop! You didn't let up on me, and now you are getting yours! You just remember that I warned you long ago what a woman like Madelaine Forsythe could do to Billy. Oh, I know Madelaine Forsythe! She's satisfied with Billy's fortune, she's satisfied with him as he is — in ten years she'll make a wreck of him! A hopeless wreck! And yet Billy really has all the elements of a fine man, and you could make him a fine man, but your damned pride won't let you! And yet you have the colossal nerve to lecture me about marriage! Rot!'

The wrathful Lily turned abruptly and walked out. Katie, her forgotten brush in hand, sat staring unseeingly at the blanched face in her mirror, too benumbed to marshal coherent thoughts. Perhaps five minutes passed. Then she felt bare arms around her neck and a kiss upon her cheek.

'I simply couldn't go to bed, Katie, I've been that nasty to you!' breathed the impulsive and penitent Lily. 'I lost my head over what you said about Peter. Please forgive me, dear!'

'Why, of course, Lily,' returned Katie; then added pleadingly: 'But — but I hope you're really not going to marry Peter Romain?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'I'm not mad at you now, Katie, but I'm certainly going to marry Peter.'

'After all the things I told you about him?'

'About those things, I think you've either been believing malignant gossip or are honestly mistaken. Anyhow, I know that you are all wrong about Peter.'

'At least promise me one thing, Lily: don't marry Peter hastily and without telling me in advance. Do that much for my sake — please!'

Lily hesitated for a moment. 'All right,' she yielded. 'I promise. But, Katie' — very slowly and wisely — 'I think you don't know very much about men.'

'Perhaps not,' sighed Katie.

'Good-night, my dear,' said Lily.

'Good-night, dear,' said Katie.

They kissed once more, and Katie was left alone.

Again Katie O'Doone was facing a crisis — perhaps the greatest of her life. The heart of her had ever imperatively demanded that she help those she cared for. There was the greatest hope for her father. Lily's danger was postponed. But Billy Gordon's danger was acute and imminent: the morrow might see him go to what seemed to be his doom. Yes, it would be no less than doom: Katie knew well that Lily's summary of the effect of Madelaine upon him was a forecast certain to become a fact.

Not until this night, when he seemed lost to her and about to be lost to himself, did Katie realize that

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

with all his faults she loved Billy Gordon. Lily had pointed out the way by which she might have saved him from this present danger. But she shrunk from that way. Her worship of work, her bitter memory of her mother's life with another brilliant and beloved idler, had long ago fixed in her the unchanging attitude never to base her life upon a man who was lolling through existence. That determination still remained with her.

Yet Billy Gordon had to be saved! But how? How? — how? — she kept crying to herself through the night.

Toward morning she began to see a way, but she even then saw no further than its first desperate step. She loathed her plan and loathed herself for her part in it. But there was no other way.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE following morning Katie waited until Lily had gone out, then she telephoned Billy Gordon's offices to which Billy Gordon occasionally came. This chanced to be one of the rare times when he was in.

'Hello, Billy — this is Katie O'Doone,' she said, forcing into her voice a challenging lightness of which she felt none at all. 'Billy Gordon, do you know you have been neglecting me frightfully! You haven't been to see me in ages!'

There was hesitation at his end of the line; then the stiff response:

'Please remember that I have remained away because I understood I was obeying your wishes.'

'Oh, don't be such a dignified old goose, Billy,' she laughed at him. 'Don't take girls, or what they say, too seriously. We're just pretentious, erratic little fools, all of us! Billy, there's something I'd like your advice about at once. Can't you call about twelve at my apartment, and then take me out to lunch?'

'Lunch? Sorry, Katie, but there's another engagement —'

'You can break it. You know how to do that kind of thing in a manner to make it seem a favor. My matter is very important or I'd not be asking you in this way.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

There was another brief hesitation, then: 'All right, Katie.'

She had to look her best; her hated rôle required that. She selected a spring walking-suit of apple-green kasha cloth, sent to her as a present from Madame Ravenal a few days since, and carefully changed into it. She had hitherto never used make-up, except upon the stage, but she now added a touch of rouge to relieve the pallor that sleeplessness had brought to her cheeks. She studied the effect in her mirror. On other days she had looked fresher, but what with the high brilliance of her eyes and the faint shadows encircling them, she had never looked more interesting and intriguing.

She had never awaited the ringing-up of a curtain with such suspense and fear of stage-fright as she now awaited the ringing of her apartment bell. But when the bell did ring, all her fugitive faculties of acting miraculously returned. She opened the door and gave Billy Gordon a tremulous but brilliant smile.

'I'm so glad you could come, Billy!' she breathed.

'I'll be glad if I can be of any help to you,' he said formally.

She led the way into the sitting-room. She bestowed herself on one end of the couch and he drew up a chair facing her. He was very ill at ease.

'Just what did you wish my advice about?' he began promptly and stiffly.

She had decided against any slow approach;

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

she could not stand the strain of a prolonged scene.

'Before I tell you that, Billy, I must tell you something else. I've been thinking of the time you were last here, three months ago, and — and what happened. I want to tell you that I now realize how brutally rude and nasty I was to you. When I think of what I said, and how I behaved, I'm simply sick with shame. I — I want to apologize — if you'll accept an apology.'

'There is no need for an apology. You were merely expressing ideas you had every right to have.'

'But expressing them so brutally, Billy! Think of what I called you!'

'You were merely stating your very positive ideas in very positive language. That is all. I repeat that no apology is necessary.'

There was a moment of silence. Billy still maintained his formal manner. Katie drew a quivering breath and spoke in a bare whisper.

'But — but, Billy — suppose those ideas were not truly my ideas?'

'I don't quite understand, Katie.'

'Suppose I've been thinking — and suppose, I now know those were not my ideas?'

'Katie! You mean — you mean — ' A choke cut off his question.

'That's what I want your advice about. Suppose I now know that I was all wrong?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Katie!' he cried huskily. 'You can't mean — that you really care?'

A look from her wide, glowing eyes was his answer.

'Katie! Katie!' he breathed.

He went white and his body became rigid with dizzy stupefaction at his bewildering resurrection of his dead hopes. Then emotion surged up, crowding out all else, and possessed him. With a cry he sprang across to Katie's side, seized her in his hungry arms and burned her lips with kisses. She kissed him back—and almost died with the pain of this mockery, this travesty, she was making of her love. She was kissing love good-bye, for when he learned the truth —

'Oh, Katie, how I love you!' he gasped. 'And you really, really care?'

'Yes.'

'Enough to marry me?'

'But — that's too late now. Lily has told me about you and Madelaine Forsythe.'

'Oh, God — I'd forgotten!' He released her and drew sharply back. 'My God, my God!' he groaned. And then: 'What a mess I'm in! I don't know how that happened between Madelaine and me. Oh, why didn't you take me before, when I asked you?'

'As I told you, I didn't know my mind,' she returned, a little sob in her voice. 'And now — and, now it's too late!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'It's not too late!' He sprang up passionately. 'I'll end my engagement with Madelaine! She may think me a cad, but somehow I'll end it! Just because I've made a terrible mistake is no reason I should stick to the mistake merely to keep my word. Besides, that engagement is secret as yet; there'll be no public humiliation for her. Katie, if I clear myself of this affair, will you marry me?'

'Yes, Billy.'

'And at once, Katie? I don't want to run the risk of having you change your mind and of losing you. At once, Katie! To-day — to-morrow?'

'As soon as you like.'

'Katie!'

He sought again to gather her into his embrace. But she held him off with an outstretched arm. Save for the ceremony, she had succeeded in her plan as far as she had thought it out: she had made herself a barrier between him and Madelaine. Her mind now reached swiftly forward for other possibilities in her plan. Vaguely she saw the beginnings of two. These she seized upon.

'I'll marry you on certain conditions, Billy.'

'I'll accept the conditions! Name them.'

'First: it's now well into May, and my show will soon be closing. I'm willing to marry you now if you wish, but I must keep on living just as I am living now until the season ends. You see I don't think I could do justice to my part if I were living in the excitement of a honeymoon.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

She had tried to state this new-born deception plausibly. Breathlessly she awaited his reaction. It came promptly; he suspected nothing.

'I understand, and that'll be all right. Next condition?'

She had thought of his money — the handicap she and his father had agreed that it was to him. The idea which now came to her was wildly daring, and she had not yet a glimpse of whither it might lead.

'There's just one other condition. It's hard to talk about. It's about your money, Billy. If I'm to marry you I want, from the very start, to help as much as I can. I don't mean to brag, but I think I know more about the practical handling of money than you do. Small wonder about that, for I've had to look out for every penny for over ten years.'

'You mean you want me to settle an allowance on you? Why, of course!'

'I'm — I'm thinking of more than that. Excuse me, Billy — you've given your pocketbook and your bank account to every one, whether they've needed it or not. It hurts me to see money wasted like that. Really' — she forced a smile of mock severity — 'really, you shouldn't be allowed the management of a penny except your pocket money.'

'I suppose you'd like for me to turn it all over to you,' he joked.

'Don't you think that would be much wiser?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

He stared at her, and when he realized that she was in earnest, he laughed in his joyous infatuation. 'What a little money-saver! Already a thrift campaign! But I'll do it! What's mine is yours; anyhow, I'll just be keeping my promise about "with all my worldly goods I thee endow." I'll have the deed all ready for to-morrow: I'll transfer all cash, bonds, stocks, motor-cars, property of every kind — and the deed will automatically be in effect from the moment of marriage. Is that sufficient?'

It was, she assured him.

'And who knows,' he continued facetiously, 'by that transfer I may escape some taxes, lawsuits, and paying debts by having everything in my wife's name! Great stuff, Katie! Next condition?'

She had a momentary impulse to mention work as a further condition. But she feared that he might smile at her with indulgent wonder, as he had done on other occasions when she had urged work, and reply that he had plenty of money, or what was the reason for his taking work from men who needed it, or that there was plenty of time to begin working; and she feared that by pressing him to give more she might arouse a suspicion or stubbornness which would cause him to withdraw what he had already yielded. So she told him there was no further condition.

'Then come! To-morrow I'll be penniless — so let's celebrate while I still have the money to pay for lunch!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

He led her down to his waiting car, the happiest young man in all New York City. She contrived a radiantly smiling face, and he had never a suspicion that perhaps she was not as wildly happy as himself.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE marriage of Katie O'Doone and William Gordon late the following afternoon was of the least ostentatious order: a few minutes in the Municipal Building to secure a license, and a few minutes in City Hall before an alderman — that was all. Before this, on the way downtown, they had stopped at Katie's bank and she had placed in her safe-deposit box the properly signed and attested deed to all of Billy's property.

They had the briefest preface to a honeymoon — a ride out into the joyous May greenery of Westchester County, then back in town for a wedding dinner that was necessarily light because of the evening's work before the singing bride. They did not know that five minutes after their license had been issued every morning paper in the city had reporters out on their trail, seeking them through telephoning their acquaintances; and when shortly before eight Katie, followed by Billy, hurried past the first-act set toward her dressing-room she was vastly surprised to find the space about her door crowded with friends and with members of the company. For several minutes she was torn and tossed about by this joyously excited mob of her well-wishers. Then Madame Ravenal and Lily possessed her, each holding an arm.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Katie O'Doone!' breathed Madame Ravenal, tears in her eyes. 'I'm as glad as if I were your mother! And you, Billy Gordon, I hope you realize how lucky you are; you've married the finest girl in town! If he doesn't believe it, Katie, we'll show him — we'll show all New York! Come over to-morrow and we'll pick a bride's outfit that'll put out all their eyes!'

'Oh, but I couldn't afford to pay for so much!'

'Can't pay?' sniffed Madame Ravenal. 'Well, if Billy Gordon is already showing himself so stingy, you don't have to pay! The clothes will be my wedding gift. Even an ugly old godmother has some rights; so over you come.'

Lily Spencer saved Katie the necessity of answering. 'Oh, Katie,' Lily exulted in a whisper, squeezing her, 'I'm tickled almost stiff that you came to your senses and married Billy! It'll be the making of him. And wouldn't I like to see Madelaine Forsythe's face when she learns! The whole affair has only one sad spot, that I have lost you.'

'But you haven't lost me — at least not for a while.' And she told them all of Billy's consent to her making no change until her season had ended.

Morris Blum congratulated her warmly, and if his old hunger for her now felt any pangs they were not evident in his sincere words and loyal bespectacled eyes. And Peter Romain congratulated her, too. Katie was run through by a shiver as his hand touched hers, and she swiftly searched his face.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

But in it there was neither mockery nor menace.

The fussy press-agent, flustered by the high publicity value of his sensation, interceded in behalf of the waiting reporters. But Katie declared, and in this Billy supported her, that she would see no reporters that night and none at any other time. She finally escaped to her dressing-room and to her private thoughts. She was burning with an added shame at this part she was playing. These good friends loved her, they were happy in her presumed happiness — and she was deceiving them, she was a fraud! These same thoughts were accusingly at the back of her consciousness all during the performance — all during the supper which Madame Ravenal insisted on giving in her and Billy's honor, and at which Lily and Morris were also present — all during the ride with Billy to her home, where he parted from her just as on evenings before he had become her husband — during almost all of the night that followed, which was the precursor of so many similar nights to come. Yes, she was a fraud — a sickening fraud!

And in the dark hours of that night she began the study of the further phases of her situation — a study that was to be constantly with her during the coming weeks. She had saved Billy from Madelaine Forsythe; she had his money. But what was next? What was the ultimate way out? The only justification of her fraud was its complete success. By what development of her fraud was success to be gained?

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

That night brought her no hint of answers to her questions.

Finally she slept a little; and she was no more than barely awake the following morning when Lily burst excitedly in upon her with an armful of newspapers. In the pressure of emotions and swift events Katie had thought of the marriage only as a private affair between herself and Billy, so she was unprepared when she saw themselves upon all the front pages. The marriage was presented as a sensational, glamorous romance, as a fairy story out of real life, with her as its colorful, appealing heroine. Not for years had the stage yielded such a story of idyllic love; again love had laughed at barriers of caste and wealth; again Cinderella and the Prince had wed; dingy tenement and marble mansion, Cherry Lane and Park Avenue, were united by love's slender circlet of gold. This was not the exact language of the newspaper romancers, but it was the strain in which they wrote.

Katie looked up from the papers and stared in astonishment at Lily. 'Oh, that's only the beginning, old dear!' Lily laughed gleefully. 'You're going to be on the front page throughout the country. Everybody loves a love story, and the love story they love best of all is where the rich, high-born, handsome young gentleman marries the beautiful, brilliant, virtuous maiden of lowly birth — and you two dear doting idiots have made that best story even more appealingly romantic by your staging a

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

three-dollar wedding! Romance's Dearest Darling — oh, this country is going to love you almost to death!'

Katie attempted no response. The mockery, the irony, that lay hidden in Lily's picture were almost too much for her. She looked back at the papers, and she came upon a paragraph which said that the elder Mr. Gordon refused to comment upon his son's marriage. Till that moment she had not even thought of Mr. Gordon and her promise to him. She guessed how shocked he must be — how he must hate her — how this unconsidered complication must embarrass Billy.

Never was an adored, applauded, smiling bride more miserable. The relations between Billy and his father was yet another situation which she must somehow set straight.

Billy called toward noon. He said nothing of his father. He did say, though, that he had just moved into an apartment he had temporarily taken. This seemed somewhat strange, but Katie asked no questions.

They lunched together and Billy was as delightful, as delighted, as tenderly exuberant as a young husband could be; but she was relieved that she had a *matinée* that afternoon and could escape for a few hours from her part of the dazzlingly happy bride. Her first appearance on the stage at the *matinée* was the signal for such affectionate and prolonged applause as she had not yet received. There was no

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

mistaking the fact that her audience approved her romance, and that her marriage was adding greatly to her vogue. At all this Katie writhed inwardly.

After the performance, Morris Blum saw her in her dressing-room and spoke for both himself and Barney Feinham. 'Of course, Katie, we're both mighty happy over your happiness. Don't let anything make you think we're not. At the same time you understand that your leaving us so suddenly upsets some plans that we had regarded as fixed. We had counted on keeping you in 'Song Time' for another season; also I'm shaping up another play in which we expected to star you season after next. Both these plays have been built to fit you. Now we've got to find another actress. What I'm driving at, Katie, is this: since we want somebody like you, I wonder if you wouldn't be good enough to help us pick out your successor.'

Katie did not answer for a moment. Then she spoke in a low voice, her face averted.

'Why look for my successor when — when you still have me?'

'Katie! What was that?' exclaimed the astonished Morris.

'Have — have I offered to resign?'

'Why — why, I took it for granted that you were going to. That Billy Gordon would want that. I — I don't understand.'

'Don't try to understand. Look for some one else, if you like — but, Morris, privately keep me in

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

mind for both those parts. You'll do that for me?'

'Of course!'

'And, Morris — please don't breathe even a hint of what I've just said.'

'Not a syllable!' he promised. Giving her a slow look of wonderment he tiptoed out.

As she was leaving a little later Peter Romain stepped quickly to her side. 'May I see you for a minute, Katie?'

She halted. 'What about?'

'Business,' he said with soft significance. 'Our business.'

'I have no business with you, Peter Romain.'

'Oh, yes, you have, Katie. And very important business. Step back into your dressing-room and we'll have a little talk over it.'

'We'll not have a talk, little or otherwise,' retorted Katie, and walked away.

'Oh, yes, we will!' he called after her in a sharp tone that sent a premonitory shiver through her.

The audience of that night took Katie to its heart as Romance's latest darling still more enthusiastically than had the *matinée* crowd. And the following morning there came a token of the universal approval which moved her even more. This was a letter from her father. He wrote in awed respect of her in her new position and yet in simple affection. He gave her his blessing, and asked for her the blessing of Heaven.

She looked forward with growing eagerness to the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

day when she was to go out and bring her father home. Whatever might happen he belonged to her; never before had she felt such need of him as now.

But after all Katie did not go for him, for when she returned home after a *matinée* on the day before she was to have gone, she found her father waiting in the sitting-room. There were embraces — new congratulations over the marriage — then the explanation. Father Burke had been at the sanitarium that day and had brought his old friend home.

Katie leaned back in her father's arms and surveyed him anew. What she saw thrilled her. His skin and eyes were clear, his features had the mould of refined but robust kindness; and his fine head, topped with its wavy, graying hair, now had a nobility that brought tears to her eyes. He was the very dream of what she had wished her father to be — a dream come true!

She clutched him again. 'Oh, Father, I'm so glad to have you again! And, Father — I'm dying to hear your voice after its rest! I'm sure it's ever so much better. Let me play the new song Morris Blum has written for you to introduce into your part.'

'Not just now, dear.'

'Do you want to come back into the show now, or would you rather wait until it reopens in the fall?'

He was the least bit embarrassed. 'I — well, you see — I think I'm not coming back at all, Katie.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Not coming back!' She stared at him in amazement. 'Father, I don't understand!'

'You see, since you've married, of course I thought it would be better if I were elsewhere. And so — and so —'

'Please go on, Father!'

'Father Burke thought — he asked me — I'm going to be with Father Burke, dear.'

'With Father Burke! Doing what?'

'It seems almost sacrilegious—for the man I've been — to say it. You know the Church is what I was trained for. At last I'm going into its service. As a lay worker. Father Burke has made me think I might help him with some of his groups. He wants me later to take over some of his talks, the ones he calls his lay sermons. I do not feel at all worthy, but I am going to do my best. If I do any good at all, it will make me very happy. I hope you don't object, Katie, or think I'm altogether presumptuous.'

Her eyes again filled with tears as she realized the full meaning of his words, and as she sensed their full significance to him: after twenty-five years of wandering through life's by-ways he was at last finding his way, in a humble capacity to be sure, into that service which had called to the warm spirit of his early youth.

'I object! I think you presumptuous!' she echoed in an awed, quavering whisper. 'Father, I think it all too wonderful for words! And, oh, I'm sure

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

you're going to be all that Father Burke thinks you're going to be! I'm sure!'

Holding each other's hands, they spoke further of his hopes, and of the arrangements for his physical comfort. It appeared that Father Burke had had a room waiting for him in the West Forties, in the heart of the region that was to be the scene of his future labors, and that he was already installed therein. When finally they had to part, it was with the understanding that she was to come on the morrow to help him transform his room into a home.

On the morrow she was there, and on the morrow after that, and on the following morrow. She welcomed these busy hours when she was her father's housekeeper, not alone for the happiness they gave her, but for the relief they afforded her from her own problems.

Then for two days her father disappeared. Katie was worried, but on the third day he called.

'I've been with your Aunt Maggie,' he announced.

'At her houseboat?'

'Yes. And at Dr. Horton's sanitarium.'

'At the sanitarium!'

'I left her there this afternoon. She's taking the cure.'

'Father!' For a moment the astounded Katie could only stare. 'Aunt Maggie in the sanitarium! How did you ever manage it?'

'It wasn't so very hard. What you'd done for me,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

of course I had to try to pass that on to my sister. She liked the change in me. And she finally said that, after all you had done, and after you had married into the Gordon family, she wasn't going to disgrace you and your friends by having it said your aunt was a drunken bum. So she agreed to take the cure.'

'Father! . . . Father! . . . It is so wonderful! Of course I'll pay for the treatment.'

'I'll pay; that is to be my privilege. I've already arranged with Father Burke to advance me the money.'

'Aunt Maggie! Oh, I'm so happy! And you, Father, how splendid of you to do such a thing!'

'I didn't do it, Katie. You did it. I went because of you, and your Aunt Maggie went because of you. Everything goes straight back to you. And, Katie dear — the O'Doones may not be such very grand people, but I think you've removed the danger forever of any of your family being drunken bums.'

Lily Spencer, being a member of the family, was very naturally present during this little scene. At her elbow was a high-ball, half drunk. She gazed at the two rejoicing figures, and took in their further rejoicing speech. Then her eyes fixed on the glowing Katie. It was a moment of rarely clear thought for Lily. She said not a word; she made no promise. But no one ever again saw Lily Spencer take a drink.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Although these days when she was perforce the smiling bride were long, hard days for Katie, yet they passed with a rapidity that was secretly terrifying. There were hours each day with Billy; her rôle of bride was daily more difficult, but she managed to keep within it. Peter Romain made several other attempts to see her, but all of these she evaded. Her popularity with her audiences increased with every performance; and Lily Spencer's prophecy of the country's interest in her romance proved to be an extravagant underestimation. Morris Blum's publishers set additional presses to work and yet could not supply the demand for 'The Heart of Katie O'Doone.'

Such was the sum of these last days. And during every hour of them Katie's thoughts and fears were directed toward the day of her accounting: what should she do then?

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE closing of 'Song Time' had been abruptly fixed for the first Saturday in June. The play might have been continued throughout the summer with fair success, but that Barney Feinham was yielding to the orders of Madame Ravenal, and that Madame Ravenal was but yielding to the urgings of her silent partner, the impatient Billy Gordon.

Katie approached these final hours with frantic dismay the like of which she had never before known. She was no nearer than on her wedding-day to seeing a clear way through her inevitable crisis. She thought of meeting Billy face to face and confessing the truth. She thought of setting down the facts and motives in a letter to him, and perhaps vanishing forever out of his ken. She thought of making her confession to his wrathful father, to whom she had given a promise which she had broken. But she shrank from all these procedures; she seemed utterly unable to stiffen her determination to giving so vast a pain for which she had no anæsthetic.

Then it was that Katie fully realized the vast difference between launching a plan born of driving desperation and with only its initial steps clearly in mind, and developing that plan practically and guiding it onward to its successful completion. She had begun something she could not finish. She had

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

written a play, now being performed and moving swiftly to its close, and for it she had no final act.

In this state of frantic helplessness and desperate indecision Katie remained right up to the time she stepped upon the stage that Saturday night which ended the run of 'Song Time' and which was also to end the period of delay granted her by Billy Gordon. In the audience was Billy Gordon, waiting to claim her for their honeymoon after the last curtain; and beside him sat Madame Ravenal, warm with maternal emotion, waiting to send her off with kisses. Her father had said that he would be in when the play was over to start her and Billy on their honeymoon with his blessing.

Katie feared that she might stumble and lose her way among her lines that night, she was that unconscious of what she was doing. But the discipline of her hundreds of repetitions of the rôle carried her safely along, and at the end the audience, which believed it was giving God-speed to a bride, gave her an ovation that was also its benediction, and went away romantically uplifted by the gratitude and happiness of her radiant smiles.

At last Katie was in her dressing-room, dizzy, palpitant. Billy would appear any minute; her respite was at an end. And still she did not know what was to be her procedure.

She was barely settled at her dressing-table when there was a knock at her door. She could not at once answer. The knock was repeated.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'See — see who it is, Mary,' she directed her maid.

The maid went to the door, and returned with a card, saying: 'The assistant stage-manager brought it.'

The card was that of Billy Gordon.

'Mary,' Katie breathed in a dry voice, 'find Mr. Gordon, and — and ask him please to wait for a few minutes.'

The maid went out. Katie wildly tried to force herself to think, but the respite she had asked ended just as it had begun. The door opened, a man's footsteps sounded, the door closed. Katie could not look about.

'I thought, Billy' she forced out a dry whisper — 'I thought I asked you to — to wait.'

'You did, but surely you knew I'd manage to see you sometime.'

The voice was not Billy's. She whirled around. 'Peter Romain!'

'At your service, Miss Katie O'Doone,' he acknowledged with a mocking bow.

She stared. He was in the costume he had worn in the finale — tight black satin shorts and snug black silk jacket and coin-hung, wide-brimmed black hat, supposedly belonging to some unidentified Spanish period; and leaning against the white door, and smiling triumphantly at her, he looked a younger and more graceful Mephisto.

'You'd better leave,' she advised. 'Billy will be here at once.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'He's sent you word?'

'I've just received his card.'

'My card, if you please,' he corrected — 'although, until I helped myself to it, it was the property of Billy. Pardon the old stage trick, dear Katie' — he inclined his head in ironic penitence — 'but I had to see you, you know, and since you had persisted in refusing to see me as myself, I was forced to use the name of another as a key to gain admittance to your barred and bolted presence.'

'Don't talk like a fool! And please leave — you have no business with me!'

'I speak the honied language that flows naturally from my lips, dear friend of my childhood,' he went on, continuing his velvet grandiloquence because he saw it irritated her as he had intended. 'And you say I have no business with you? Why, Katie, Katie, how can you be so forgetful!'

'You'll get out, Peter Romain, or I'll have you put out!'

'You wouldn't be so inhospitable, Katie! Not to an old friend who has come to wish you honeymoon wishes, and incidentally to talk a little business. But for fear you might —' He locked the door, put the key into his pocket, and moved toward her. 'That's better. A momentary impulse will not now be so likely to nullify your natural hospitality.'

'What do you want?' she demanded.

All exaggeration, all flippancy, went from his manner. His voice snapped at her.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'You know very well what I want! You're leaving to-night — this is my last chance. Did you think you were going to slip away without seeing me, without squaring with me? Not much! I've come for my share, and I'm going to have it!'

'If you please, your share of what?'

'Don't stall! My split of what you're getting out of Billy Gordon!'

'You're crazy, Peter Romain! I've not had a penny from Billy Gordon!'

'Cut out that bunk! I know better! If you wouldn't see me, Billy Gordon would. He's a friend, and he thinks me his friend. So when he was mooning about you, I got out of him the fact that he'd given you everything. And given it to you before the marriage. To get you to marry him, I bet! Oh, but you played safe!'

For the moment she was silent.

'You're even deeper and smoother as a dollar-grabber than I thought you, Katie O'Doone, and Billy Gordon is a far easier sucker than I believed a sucker could ever be. To get a boob love-sick and tap him for his entire roll, a ten-million-dollar roll — you belong at the head of your class, Katie!'

To have tried to convince Peter of the truth would have served no purpose. In his cynicism he would not have believed her. She had to limit herself to speech he would understand.

'Even if I did get all that you say, you have no

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

right to a share in it,' she declared. 'So again I ask you to get out!'

'No right, you say!' he cried, his lean face thrusting close to hers, his fingers curving into talons. 'You listen! I planned all this in the first place. I gave you the idea. The idea was mine. I've helped in the game, even if you didn't know it. And I'm going to have my split, or you —'

'You're not going to have the split of a penny!' she interrupted. 'If there was a game, I put it across myself. You did not help me one bit. So there's no reason for my splitting.'

While they spoke there had been a knock at the door, then a rattle, but neither had heard it. Peter's face darkened with fury, and his black eyes flashed with an evil fire.

'So, you would try that on me! You'd take my idea, use it, then drop me overboard! You damned double-crosser! You think you can get away with that trick, you think you can put that over on Peter Romain? Well, you can't! Either you split with me, or I'll blow sweet Katie O'Doone higher than a thousand heavens!'

'How, Peter — how?' she taunted.

'I'll tell Billy Gordon!'

'Tell him — please do! Billy knows all about me from the time I was a washer-girl down in Cherry Lane up to the present. A lot of secret past I have for you to base your blackmail on!'

'But I'll tell him something else! He's love-blind

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

now, but he's no permanent fool, and when I tell him of your talking the scheme over with me, and when I drive home how you played him for a sure-thing sucker, his eyes will open and he'll see you for exactly what you are!'

'Tell all that if you like!' she cried, her slender figure defiantly erect, her eyes blazing scornfully into his. 'Now I'm tired of all this, and you're wasting your time! So understand this, for it's final: you're not going to hold me up for one dollar, one dime, one penny! And now get out of here, you pickpocket, you imitation blackmailer! Get out!'

At this the rising fury in Peter Romain swept into full possession of him and he lost himself. He clutched Katie's wrists with steely fingers, his dark face convulsed with wild passion.

'You'll pay, damn you!' he cried, ruthlessly twisting her arms so that they seemed to be unscrewing from agonized shoulder-sockets. He had her locked in such a grip that she had no chance to struggle, much less to fight him back. 'You'll pay! You can't double-cross me and not pay! If you won't pay money, I'll take it out of your bones, your pretty body!'

'Help! Help!' she cried out in her agony.

'Shut up!' His right hand loosed a wrist long enough for his open palm to strike savagely across her cheek; and then he had the wrist again before her half-paralyzed arm could jerk it to safety. His face glowered with an unreckoning rage. 'Shut up!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

That was only a mild sample! Just remember, you double-crosser — I'll find ways of twisting your body till the day you die! Yes, and your soul, too!' And he gave her arms a further twist.

'Help! Help!' she again cried in her pain.

'Shut up!' he raved, in his rage forgetting where he was. 'No, shout as much as you like! Shout your pretty head off — shout your pretty voice out — shout, damn you —'

'Help!' she gasped once more. 'Help!'

Katie was facing the door, and just then she saw it open. Peter, his back to it, heard and saw nothing. In the doorway appeared Billy Gordon. Billy crossed the room in a step, seized Peter's shoulder, flung him about and swung a blow to Peter's jaw that sent Peter floundering to his knees.

'Katie, Katie!' Billy cried, taking her in his arms. 'What was Peter Romain up to?'

'He used — your name — to get in here,' she panted. 'He demanded money — if I wouldn't pay — he said he'd expose me to you.'

'And I will!' shouted Peter, who had come groggily to his feet.

'Nothing from you, Romain!' ordered Billy. He looked quickly back at Katie. 'I heard some of it through the door, Katie. I was at the door several minutes ago, but it was locked and I couldn't make my knocks heard. I sent for the house-manager and his passkey. But what I heard I didn't get quite straight. Don't tell me anything you don't want to,

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

dear, but if you can tell me — What did Peter Romain threaten to expose to me? On what grounds did he demand money? Why did he attack you?’

Katie had regained something of her breath and her control. ‘He claimed that I had married you through a scheme, and he claimed that the scheme was his own. He demanded money for helping along my alleged scheme to marry you. I refused. He then threatened to expose my trick to you if I didn’t pay. When I still refused, he became furious and you yourself saw part of what he then did.’

‘Romain!’ breathed Billy with ominous huskiness, shifting Katie entirely into his left arm and advancing a pace with clenched fist. ‘Get ready, you dirty Judas — I’m going to beat the very life out of you!’

‘Come on!’ invited Peter, now utterly beyond all caution or restraint. ‘Come on, you poor simpleton, you poor boob! But before you try to beat me up, get wise to something. What Katie told you is true all right, but it’s only the nice part of the truth and only a third of the truth! If you don’t want to be a worse fool than you are, you’ll get all the truth while you still have the chance!’

‘I’d believe nothing that came out of you!’

‘You’re afraid of the truth!’ taunted Peter, his face a malignant leer. ‘You poor, dumb, blind boob — afraid to learn how a show-girl has made you into the biggest joke of the last dozen years!’

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Hear him, Billy, please,' Katie impulsively spoke up.

'Listen to his slander, Katie? Why, there's not a streak of truth in all that dog's body!'

'But please let him talk. I'd rather have him say his very worst in the open, so that there'll be no danger from him again.'

'All right,' Billy yielded. 'But, Romain, make your lies short!'

'What I'll say to you will be short in words, but it'll be long enough in substance to last Billy Gordon all his life!' retorted Peter. With his lean, dark face, its eyes glittering with expectant triumph and the desire to inflict excruciating pain, he seemed the perfect figure of the devil's advocate. 'There was a trap set for you, and I was behind the game at first, and its purpose was to clean you out of a big piece of your money. But Katie sprung that trap alone and grabbed all you've got. I'm not asking you to believe that now, for I know you won't, you saphead. Why, you —'

'I told you to make it short!' interrupted Billy.

'You listen to this, then, and let all its meanings sink in: Why did Katie insist upon getting all your fortune in her hands *before* the marriage, if she were not playing a sure-thing game? If you are not an utter idiot, just that one item of her procedure will make it plain to you that she was after your money solely, that she was none too certain about your after behavior, and that she was taking absolutely

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

no risks. That sort of procedure is definite proof of the sure-thing gambler, the sure-thing swindler, the smooth, sure-thing woman out to get a man's money through some love-trap. If a woman wasn't that sort, and if that wasn't her game, wouldn't she at least be willing to trust the man she claims to love until *after* she was married to him? Let that idea soak in! Let that idea talk to you!

'Any more of that stuff?' ominously inquired Billy.

'Yes! Take her unwillingness to be your wife even after she was married and had your money! Any sane man would have seen through that. Her excuse to you that it would interfere with the show, that was only a stall. Living with you as your wife would not have interfered with her work. Her true reason was she didn't want to be your wife! And why should she want to be, when she already had everything that she wanted out of you? Let that sink in! Doesn't that convince you of what she is?'

'You are through?' Billy demanded.

'Isn't that enough to show you, you infatuated fool? Then — then — by God, listen to this!' A wild idea had just flashed into Peter's maddened brain, and he thrust savagely out with it, a stab in the dark. 'Listen to this! She not only has refused to be your wife, but she has never intended to be your wife! At this moment she intends never to be your wife! You think you are about to start on your

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

honeymoon, but if you go, you'll go alone! Yes, you'll go alone!

'That's quite all?'

'Yes, and it's enough — you blind fool!'

Billy's voice trembled with contemptuous rage, vast, yet controlled. 'I was a fool all right when I chose such a rat for a friend — but I haven't time now to wipe that rat out.'

He turned his back on Peter, and looked down on Katie who was still in the crook of his left arm. 'Come on, dear; it's time for us to go.'

Peter, following up his chance shot, sprang forward and faced the pair, his desire to hurt unsated. 'You don't believe me?' he taunted. 'Then ask her questions on the three points I've made! Ask Katie O'Doone.'

Billy reached out and flung him aside. 'Come on, Katie.'

'You don't dare ask her those three questions, you don't dare ask her!' mouthed Peter.

Katie had not moved at Billy's pressure. It was as if she were suddenly anchored, had become a dead weight.

'Come on, dear,' Billy repeated.

'I — I —' she breathed.

'Anything wrong, Katie?' he asked anxiously.

'Yes,' put in Peter. 'She's afraid to answer you! And you don't dare ask her!'

'I — I — just a moment, Billy,' she whispered.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

A palsy had come swiftly upon her. It had not been brought on by Peter's accusations; they had left her unmoved. It had been induced by Billy's repeated 'Come on.' Those words had wrenched her back to the briefly forgotten crisis. Its desperate last minute was now immediately before her and she was still without a plan. In her dizzy chaos she had, as might a drowning person, just two fixed ideas: she was not going, could not go, with Billy; and somehow, whatever might follow as the other results, she must adhere to that element of her original idea which was aimed at the saving of Billy, and she must still direct that element as before.

'Anything wrong, Katie?' Billy asked again.

'She's afraid to answer you!' Peter drove in tauntingly. 'Because if you asked those three questions, and she answered, it would end everything between you!'

'Be still, you rat!' Billy commanded. 'Katie, Katie — what is it?'

She disengaged herself from his arm, and moved half a pace away. She shivered as one chilled by an unearthly cold. She gazed at Peter Romain in dread and fascination. For a moment she was a disanimated figure. Her mind, all her senses, were drained away. And then — and then they flooded swiftly back, and with them they brought a dawning idea that took her breath anew by the swiftness, the cauterizing keenness, with which it might end everything. That idea had been stirred into instant life by Peter Ro-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

main's last taunt — that her answers would end everything.

Her dawning idea was as desperate, as unconsidered, as unforeseeing, as had been her original idea which had led to her present situation. She had no time for thinking; she had only time to act.

'Katie, Katie — what is it?' Billy insisted. 'What *is* the matter? Why don't you answer?'

'She's troubled by my three questions,' taunted Peter. 'Let her answer them, Billy Gordon, and you'll get a jolt that will jar your eyes open and keep you awake the rest of your life!'

Katie blinked at him. Peter's last sentence repeated itself in her brain, but it did not carry Peter's meaning. A jolt! That might be the very thing to awaken the real Billy. A terrific jolt — one whose impact might almost blind with its first pain!

Again Peter was speaking. 'She knows I'm right, Billy Gordon — that's what's the matter! And since you don't dare ask her my three questions, I'll ask her myself. Katie —'

'Keep out of this, Romain!' warned Billy.

'If you trust her, Gordon, you shouldn't fear anything she says. Katie, first question: When you demanded Billy Gordon's money in advance of marriage and as a condition of marriage, wasn't your purpose in that to make absolutely certain, while he was in an infatuated mood, that you got his money?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Yes,' whispered Katie. And that was a true answer.

'Katie, that's not so!' cried the startled Billy. 'That's not so!'

Katie kept her white, strained face averted from him and fixed unwaveringly upon Peter Romain. Peter was as much surprised by her admission as had been Billy, but he did not show it.

'Katie, second question: Your excuse about the marriage relation interfering with the show, was not that pure bunk and just a stall to gain time?'

'Yes,' breathed Katie. And again she gave a true answer.

'Katie — my God!' whispered Billy, going very pale and staring at her.

'Katie, third and last question: From the very first has it not been your intention never to fulfill your marriage contract and really be Billy Gordon's wife? And is it not your present intention not to go away with him to-night as his wife?'

'Yes,' breathed Katie. And for the third time her answer was the literal truth.

'Katie, you don't mean that?' gasped Billy. 'That's not true? You're — you're just — just joking?'

She turned on him a face that was empty of blood. But her eyes were quite steady. She was using control; but if beyond that she were doing any acting, it was unconscious.

'What I have said — is all true,' the dead and

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

formal words came from the lips. 'I am not — not going with you. You must accept — these facts.'

'Katie! I don't believe you — I don't believe you!' he cried out in agony. 'It's just a joke, Katie! Only a joke! That must be the explanation! Katie, isn't that the explanation?'

But it was Peter Romain who obliged with an explanation, raucously and joyously. 'Don't you see it yet? You've been trimmed by a gold-digger! Your Katie O'Doone is the smoothest, most thorough-digging gold-digger this town has ever known. You're cleaned out, and she's through with you! You're excess baggage! You're an exhausted and abandoned gold mine! Understand all that, and everything is explained to you!'

If it were possible, Katie went yet more white at Peter's loathsome words, but she attempted no denial. She had assumed her part; she had to adhere to it.

'Katie,' Billy whispered hoarsely after a moment's pause, sickening horror and pain in his eyes. 'Katie — oh, Katie — that — that can't be true!'

'I think — you'd better go,' was her response.

'Yes, you'd better go, Billy!' echoed Peter, smirking. 'The lady is quite through with you, so run along!'

A brief flush came into Billy's cheeks. 'When I go, Romain,' he gritted, 'it will be after you, even if I have to throw you out!'

'I'll save you that trouble, Billy, for I'm entirely

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

finished here.' He moved to the door, but at it he turned with his mocking smile. 'Before I go, dear friends, permit me to inform you that I'm not yet through with you two. This Nation, through the kindness of its newspapers, is going to have the chance to laugh at you, Billy Gordon, as the century's best joke! The man who married an ex-tenement girl, a show-girl — trimmed out of all his money by her — then neatly dropped by her into the ash-can! What a roar from the country! And the sweet, idolized Katie O'Doone, the most recent Cinderella, the latest of these everybody's sweet-hearts — what will her devoted admirers think when they learn from the papers that her proper title is Katie, the Queen of the Gold-Diggers? Oh, what a smash! Oh, what a story — what a story!'

With a profound bow and with a wide flourish of his wide hat, Peter Romain was gone.

Billy and Katie gazed at each other for several moments in silence. Then Billy managed a slow whisper through dry lips:

'Is this really all there is to be said?'

'This is all,' she whispered back.

She had expected him to explode in wrath, to berate her, curse her. But he did not. It would have been easier for her to bear had he so done. Instead, he bore himself much as he had done on that night in her apartment when he had proposed to her and she had rejected him with lashing words — only now his unspoken pain was ten times more eloquent.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

He did not even refer to his lost fortune; perhaps it was so unimportant that it then had no place in his mind. Death seemed to settle upon his gray face, and killing agony to fill and overflow his eyes. Those pain-brimming eyes held upon her for yet another moment; then he turned and very quietly went out.

Katie sank in three slow, stiff hinges into her chair, and gazed into her mirror at a face as coldly and staringly dead as had been Billy's. Numbly she knew what she had done. But she had merely held to the essential lines of her original course. She had seen no other way. And Billy in time would forget the hurt and be the better for it all.

But — but (it now rushed in upon Katie) her three 'yeses,' each true in itself, had united in their obvious implications to tell a colossal lie. And that lie had sent Billy from her forever! And she — and she —

'Oh, Billy — Billy!' she cried in a whisper. And then her control gave way, her head fell into her folded arms, and at last her tears loosed their wild flood.

CHAPTER XXIX

FOR several minutes after the white-faced Billy had gone, in his eyes the horror and the death agony of a mighty love that was now disillusioned, but on his lips no pleading or reproaches, Katie sat crumpled and sobbing, her head bowed amid the disorder of her dressing-table. How she did love Billy! And her words and behavior of a few minutes gone would make him despise and hate her forever. She would never see him again — never. Or if chance did order that they should meet, he would regard her with the hard and scornful eyes of one who wished that they had been better strangers.

And, oh, how she did love him!

But then — thus she tried to quiet and comfort herself with argument — she had never intended to have him. So this loss of him was in no wise to be considered a real loss. The break with him was but a necessary if painful part of her plan, a plan that as a whole had succeeded or was moving toward success. She had saved him from Madelaine Forsythe and the dangers Madelaine represented. She had temporarily removed from his control the great fortune which had been an impediment to his best development. She had given him a shock that would arouse all the latent and loafing energies of his manhood. All that

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

she had done — all! — had been for his sake; and these things were going to unite in their influences to make him that splendid man whose germ now existed within him.

Of course, she would see that he got his money back some day. In the meantime she would have to take the necessary legal steps to tie up his fortune; some court action possibly — as yet she had no idea what her steps would be. She disliked this part of her plan; she wished she could pass on the money and its responsibility to some one else. But she had to go through with this sordid detail herself, in order that her plan in its entirety should be convincingly real to Billy.

Yes, she had done right. She had succeeded. All was going to be for the best for Billy. In time he would forget any hurt she had given him. And her own hurt — what was her hurt but an incidental phase of her plan which she should have fully foreseen, and which was therefore something which now should be entirely discounted?

But — but —

Despite these arguments, Katie was about to break again into sobbing, when there was a rap upon her door. She choked back the sob and strove for control.

‘Come — come in,’ she requested.

In her mirror she saw that it was her father who entered. She was glad that he was her caller. There was warm comfort in his face — the face that looked

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

so much more distinguished and kindly with its new clearness.

'Here I am, Katie,' he announced; and then asked anxiously: 'What's the matter, dear?'

'Nothing, Father; nothing at all,' she answered, rising and turning to him.

'But you've been crying!'

She forced a smile. 'Isn't — isn't that natural?'

He smiled fondly back at her. 'I understand, my dear. Tears of happiness. Love must have its cry. Where's your husband?'

'He — he stepped out a minute ago.'

'Then I suppose this is the last minute I can have you all to myself.' Terry O'Doone stepped close and kissed her on the forehead. 'You are going away with my blessing and benediction, Katie. And I'll ever be praying that life will be as good to you as you deserve.'

'Father — Father —' her dry whisper began to protest, and could go no further.

'I think you have a good man for a husband, Katie. Your future life is to be among the rich and the proud of the earth; and though my words may not seem becoming, even in so lowly a son of the Church, I want you always to remember your own pride. They'll try, but don't let those people hurt you or humble you or bend you. Always remember that in your soul you are as good and as fine as the best of them. Always be your own self. For somehow, Katie — somehow' — there was a choke of

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

reverence in his rich voice — 'somehow a lot of God was born in you.'

'Stop, Father — stop!' she broke in.

'And if life gives you all you deserve, dear, then all your life will be as rich and beautiful and happy as the honeymoon on which you start to-night.'

'You must not talk like that! You must not!' She drew away and stared wildly at him. The irony of his reverent words was almost too much for her.

'What *is* the matter, Katie?'

She could not let him continue in his benedictive strain. 'There — there is not going to be any honeymoon.'

'What's that?'

'There is to be no honeymoon.'

'No honeymoon!' he cried. 'No honeymoon! You mean that, Katie? You're speaking the truth?'

Her look of misery was assurance of how truly she spoke.

'What has happened, Katie? Tell me! Tell me!'

She strove frantically to order her mind and assemble her story — the story by which she was to live. The true story was, of course, never to pass her lips. But no manufactured explanation was at that time permitted Katie, for just then Madame Ravenal, and behind her Lily Spencer, came hurrying into the dressing-room through the door Terry O'Doone had left open. The faces of both were alive with unbelief and fear.

'Katie, Katie,' cried Madame Ravenal, 'tell us

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

it's not so — this awful story we've just been told!'

'What story — who told it to you?' asked Katie.

'Peter Romain!'

That name alone was enough to make Katie feel ill. 'Just what did Peter tell you?'

'He said that' — and Madame Ravenal rapidly gave the high points of the scene which had so recently taken place in the dressing-room with Katie and Peter and Billy as its figures. How Katie, under pressure, had been forced to admit that she had married Billy for his money; how she had duped him into transferring his entire fortune to her before the marriage and as a condition of marriage; how by false excuses she had gained his consent to a postponement of the honeymoon; how from the very beginning she had planned that there should be only the ceremony and no real marriage at all; how she had held these things back from Billy, and told them to him only in the very hour of the honeymoon's supposed beginning. The story, as reported by Peter, had every malignant exaggeration and every malicious inference that the maddened and vengeful Peter could lay tongue to.

'There, that's what he told us,' ended Madame Ravenal. 'It's not true, it can't be true! You simply couldn't do such a thing, Katie. But please tell us that it isn't true!'

Katie hesitated a moment, gazing at these three persons so supremely dear to her. They awaited her eagerly, but they had no doubt concerning her reply.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Speaking was more difficult than she had dreamed.

'It's incredible, preposterous!' her father exclaimed. 'There can be no truth in such a tale!'

'Much of it's untrue,' Katie forced from her lips. 'But — but its essentials — are the truth.'

There were cries of astoundment from the three. Then there were cries of protest, of unbelief.

'In its essentials it is the truth,' Katie reiterated.

They stared dumbly at her, belief and horror dawning in their eyes. Her father was the first to regain speech.

'Katie,' he cried hoarsely, clutching an arm, 'Katie, you really played such a game upon a man? And just for the sake of his money?'

'Yes,' she forced out.

He loosed her arm and, looking white and very sick, shrunk a pace backward from her. For once Madame Ravenal's words had been slow in coming, but when they did come they came in a rush of scathing fury. She pushed herself squarely before Katie, her eyes blazed, her whole figure trembled with the volcanic fire of her wrath.

'Katie O'Doone' — her molten words poured out lava-like — 'I took you in and did all I could for you — I felt like a mother for you, I thought you felt like a daughter for me — I was proud and happy to help you on — I thought nothing was too good for you! And you repay me by turning out the lowest, vilest, craftiest creature a woman can be! I hate myself for being taken in by such a person! And to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

think that I helped you trap Billy Gordon — Billy Gordon, who, without pledge or promise or hope of any kind, backed your show with his money and gave you your real chance to become the favorite that you are! And you, you heartless, scoundrelly schemer — you'd play such a trick on a man like Billy Gordon!

'You mean — Billy Gordon put up the money for "Song Time"? ' she asked dazedly. 'I thought you had done that!'

'I put up part, but the smaller part. He did not want you even to suspect that he was helping, so he put up his money through me and left his share of control in my power to be handled for your benefit. That's what Billy Gordon did for you! And now you do such a thing for him!'

'I'll — I'll pay him back.'

'Pay him how? Out of his own fortune you've robbed him of?'

'No. I'll take "Song Time" out on tour. I'll work for almost no salary.'

'Oh, no, you'll not! Not while I control the piece! Besides, you couldn't earn a dime. As an actress you're dead. The beautiful, the innocent, the childish, the beloved Katie O'Doone, everybody's darling to-night, will be loathed and despised by everybody on Monday. You'll be America's most notorious and shameful woman. No decent, self-respecting manager would pay you five dollars a week. Katie O'Doone was at the beginning of a marvelous

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

career, but Katie O'Doone has smashed herself in every way and smashed herself forever!

Katie had vaguely foreseen harsh consequences to herself and had accepted them, but she had dreamed of nothing so dire as Madame Ravenal's terrific summary. Yet she now realized that Madame Ravenal pictured no more than the truth. She shivered.

'All the same,' she breathed involuntarily, 'I saved Billy Gordon!'

'Saved Billy Gordon?' repeated Madame Ravenal, her speech storming onward. 'I don't know what game you're now trying to put over on us, but you've certainly done nothing to save Billy Gordon! You've almost killed him to-night in private. On Monday you're going to kill him again in public. Peter Romain will get the whole story into the papers somehow, and Peter will not soften a single detail to spare you or Billy. Billy is proud and sensitive. You've not only made yourself a figure of shame, but you've also made Billy Gordon a figure of shame. On Monday he will be laughed at, sneered at, jeered at, as the greatest fool of the age. The rich, soft-brained young fool who married a scheming, tenement-born girl of the theater — a girl who coaxed the infatuated fool into giving her all his money before she married him, a most obvious trick — a girl who, having all his money, was really never his wife for a single hour, but deserted him on the very eve of the honeymoon! What a laugh-story

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

for the papers of the whole country, how the yellow papers will play it up! There's nothing more cruel, more deadly, than a laugh! Not a person will ever respect or trust the soft-brained idiot you've publicly made out of Billy Gordon — and he'll never respect or trust himself! You've ruined Billy Gordon, and any career he might have had! Yes, you've murdered the very soul of Billy Gordon, the man in him, by a laugh!

Katie was tremblingly aghast at this appalling denunciation and its picture of the consequences to Billy. She was too benumbed for speech. She had been prepared for consequences to herself, but her decisions and acts of the last hour had been too swift and too unpremeditated for her to see anything but the great benefits which had filled her mind. She had tried to save Billy, and — yes, Madame Ravenal was right, she now saw — her great plan had ruined him! She felt the dizzy void, the infinite sickness and despair, of death itself.

'Well, I suppose you're happy, girl!' Madame Ravenal raged on. 'Speak up and tell us how proud and happy you are over all you've done!'

But Katie could only draw shuddering breath and hold wide, stricken eyes upon Ravenal, Lily, and her white-faced father.

'Katie O'Doone — and I've all but worshiped you!' breathed Lily Spencer, her stupor giving way to staring scorn.

'Please, Katie,' her father besought in a dry

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

whisper of anguish, 'please speak — say you didn't intend all that!'

'I — I did not,' she managed to gasp. 'I never dreamed — never thought — never thought —'

'Oh, of course you never thought!' the prosecuting attorney of a Ravenal caught her up. 'And I suppose you never thought of your own father either. I've had nothing to do with the fight Terry O'Doone has made, but I've been mighty proud of him because of his grand come-back. I've seen him as a man who is going to become a great influence for good — perhaps in time becoming some kind of a great, sympathetic, popular preacher among the sort of people he can reach and who need him. Well, you've smashed all that. You've smashed your father and his future. What influence for good and what standing can he have, with his people all knowing that the notorious, gold-digging, man-wrecking Katie O'Doone is his daughter? Of course you never thought of that either!'

At this last great item in the mounting total of the unforeseen consequences of her well-intentioned acts, Katie stood overwhelmed, incapable of speech or action, stricken with ultimate horror and agony.

'Of course you never thought of that!' the accusing Ravenal again drove at her.

Katie's voice came as a thinnest whisper. 'I — I never thought. Father — I never thought.' Again she faced Ravenal. 'What — what else — have I done?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Isn't that enough? The papers will figure that quite a record for you: you've smashed the splendid figure that was Katie O'Doone — you've smashed Billy Gordon — you've smashed your own father — you've smashed all the friends who loved you and believed in you!'

Katie, white, speechless, riven with anguish, held tortured eyes on the three figures whom she loved so much, who had loved her so much — the faces of Ravenal and Lily, scornful and accusing. Just so would all the world look at her. And the things that Ravenal had just said, these all the world would believe and repeat and keep on repeating. And whatever her intentions may have been, these dire consequences were the strict truths of the future. Had such dire results ever before been born of good intentions?

This was the deepest point of suffering Katie had ever known. All her eager ideas and plans had lived only to culminate in this catastrophe of shame, involving in its common destruction herself and the two men she loved. Her very heart had been but a betraying instrument of disaster.

In the very moment when anguish and despair were inflicting their blackest torments, Terry O'Doone moved spasmodically forward and caught her to him. 'I can't believe it, Katie — not any of it!' he cried out in fierce denial that had in it the tone of triumphant faith. 'If the story were not so terrible, then perhaps I might believe it. But it is all

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

so very terrible that I know Katie O'Doone could not have planned and done such things! Such things are not in Katie O'Doone's nature! So they are not true! Not any of them!

At these ringing words of her father, the tense horror that had gripped Katie suddenly gave way. She could stand no more. She had said that no one should know the truth. But it is one thing to sacrifice self and be silent about it, when the ends of the sacrifice have been achieved and silence will make them secure. It is quite a different matter when the sacrifice has failed and there is not one good result requiring silence's protection.

'No, it's not true!' she cried gaspingly. 'At least not true in the way you all thought!' And sobbing wildly against her father's shoulder she choked out her own version of her story: her plans—her motives—how the pressure of events had forced swift decisions upon her—how that very night Peter Romain had sought to blackmail her—how, incensed at her refusal, he had invented the sordid reasons for her marriage and taunted Billy with them—how she in her desperation had accepted these reasons as the only explanation that might cure Billy and effect all her original ends. 'I intended only the best for Billy,' she ended with a convulsive cry, 'and, oh, how terribly it's all come out! What a mess I've made of everything!'

'I knew that first story was not the right story—

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

I knew it!' her father cried exultantly. 'Katie — oh, Katie — what a girl I have!'

'Katie O'Doone,' demanded Madame Ravenal in an awed whisper, 'you did all those things — you were willing to have the world think the worst of you — because you were trying to do the best for Billy Gordon?'

'Yes,' she sobbed. 'But — but it all turned out the very worst!'

'But you tried! Katie O'Doone' — Madame Ravenal's voice was tremulous and husky — 'I'm a quick-tempered, vile-tongued, nasty old woman and I'm not fit to be forgiven. But all the same I'm hoping you will forgive me — for — for, Katie darling, I love you more than ever!'

'And I can say all that and more, Katie!' interjected Lily. 'What I've thought has been as bad as what Madame Ravenal has said. But if you could only forgive —'

'Of course I forgive you — both of you!' Katie assured them quickly, and then frantically went on: 'But however good my motives were, just the same those terrible things Madame Ravenal told about are all true and I'm to blame for them all! Oh, if only I could undo them — if only I could undo them!'

'Those things are not all true yet,' Madame Ravenal corrected. 'I meant that they'd begin to be true on Monday, after Peter Romain had got his story to the papers. It's midnight now; the papers of Monday morning are the earliest he can reach.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'If we could stop Peter!' cried Katie.

'I'd be glad to have him stopped — eliminated in any way,' agreed Madame Ravenal. 'But stopping Peter Romain would not help very much.'

'Why not?'

'Peter can give the story a quick start — he's very likely out trying to start it right now — and he can help a great deal to make it pointedly scandalous. That's all Peter can do. The story would start of its own accord just as soon as it became known that there had been a break between Katie O'Doone and Billy Gordon during the very hour they were to have started on their honeymoon, and that there was to be no honeymoon. After that start, everything else would follow.'

'Then — then there's no way for me to stop that story, to undo all the things I've done?' cried the frantic Katie.

'There is only one way to stop that story,' Madame Ravenal replied slowly and steadily. 'That is to eliminate the story.'

'Eliminate the story? I don't understand, Madame Ravenal?'

'I dare say your father does.'

Terry O'Doone slowly nodded. 'If I understand Madame Ravenal, she means that the only way to stop the story, and so prevent its consequences, is for all parties concerned openly and promptly to accept the marriage as the happy event it was originally supposed to be.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'What!' cried the astounded Katie.

'Exactly that, Katie,' concurred Madame Ravenal. 'There is absolutely no other way. All of you accept the marriage, and Peter Romain and the papers will have no scandalous story to tell. The newspapers will then merely have their expected story of the happy couple and their honeymoon.'

'You mean — you mean,' gasped Katie, 'that the only way out of my — my pretended marriage is to regard it as a real marriage? You mean I've trapped my own self in this marriage?'

'I'm afraid you have, Katie. At any rate, you'll have either to accept the consequences we spoke of, or else accept the marriage as a marriage you must live up to.'

'But I can't accept it, and I won't!' she burst out. 'I never intended to marry Billy Gordon! And I've told you I married him merely because I saw it was the only way to block him off from marrying Madeline Forsythe! I intended never to live with him — never to be his wife — I intended to let him have his freedom as soon as he could get it. Do you think I could regard a marriage, entered into with those ideas, a real marriage? Do you think, even if I loved him, I'd change my mind so suddenly and take a loafer for my husband? Do you think' — her voice was beginning to ring with passion, for an old memory had come surging into her — 'do you think I have no pride, no self-respect, to wish to enter the family of Mr. Gordon to be looked down upon, to be

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

regarded as an inferior, to be snubbed, to be insulted — a man who once came to me and tried to hire me to keep out of his family, and who made perfectly clear to me what a very different breed of a daughter-in-law would be acceptable to him! Me marry into that family? Never! Ask me anything but that. But that, never!’

‘Can’t you help her see the best way, Mr. O’Doone?’ asked Madame Ravenal.

‘I can’t urge her in the matter of such a marriage as this. I know she’ll do what’s best.’

‘Marry into that family?’ repeated Katie. ‘Ask me anything but that!’

‘I’m not asking you to do anything, Katie,’ continued Madame Ravenal. ‘Just remember that you are already married. Remember that your father and I see the happy acceptance of that marriage as the only thing that will avert disaster. But we’ll both be glad if you can think of a way that will be easier for you. Think it over, Katie.’

Katie quieted her passion and thought. Her face again grayed in its desperation.

‘You are right—it’s the only way!’ she whispered, her spirit writhing. ‘But, oh, I can’t! I can’t! Not with that Mr. Gordon despising me — with his harsh, terrible pride —’

‘How about your own pride, Katie?’ interrupted Madame Ravenal. ‘Isn’t it almost as much of a barrier? In your own independent way aren’t you just as proud and stiff-necked and stubborn, and as

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

self-centered in your pride, as this terrible Alexander Gordon himself? Think of your own pride, Katie.'

And Katie thought; and within her took place one of the greatest struggles of her life. Despite her high emotion, a few swift moments of penetrating vision and self-analysis were granted her. She saw her pride in a clear, sharp light: that fierce pride that had dominated her from that far Cherry Lane day when she had fought against the idea of her mother having a charity funeral. Yes, she now told herself, her pride was as great and as unbending as was Mr. Gordon's. And yes, it was her pride, rather than any lack of love, that had balked at the thought of marriage with Billy; pride and egotism and selfishness. She had not been willing to take a human risk, to make allowance, to regard marriage as necessarily a compromise of two natures. She had thought too much of her own secure entity, of her desire to be her own untrammelled self. She had been too selfishly, domineeringly proud to accept anything less than certainty, and anything less than her own full acceptance by all others.

'You are right — I have been terribly proud!' she breathed. And none there knew what an effort that admission cost Katie O'Doone; and none could then foresee how this recognition of perhaps her greatest virtue as perhaps her greatest fault was in future days to enrich and soften Katie and add to her gracious understanding. 'But I think I'm not proud now. After what I've done — I can't be

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

proud. But what you suggest, it's not possible. Even if I were willing, there's Billy. Billy won't have it.'

'How to make Billy accept must be your own personal and immediate problem,' Madame Ravenal pointed out.

'Oh, but I can't face him again! Not so soon!'

'You must,' said Madame Ravenal.

She looked appealingly at her father. 'Father, must I?'

'You must, dear, and at once — if you are to try this way.'

Pulsing with fear and suspense, she stood for a long moment considering the proposal in all its aspects. Nothing could have been asked her that would have been more difficult.

'All right — I'll try to see him,' she yielded in a dry, weak whisper. 'I don't know if he'll see me, or if he'll listen. And you understand, don't you, that under the circumstances I simply cannot be his real wife. I simply can't. If he's willing, I'll live with him, but I'll be just a make-believe wife — a wife in name only, for the sake of appearances, to stop all talk. It will be for me just what our marriage of the last two weeks has been, except that we shall be under the same roof. I'll act the part of the happy bride for a year — then he can have a separation. I hope this will do. I can do no more.'

'That will save the situation,' said Madame Ravenal.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

Terry O'Doone nodded.

'But remember that Peter Romain will be busy,' Madame Ravenal reminded her. 'You must act at once.'

'I'll try to see Billy to-morrow,' Katie promised.

They discussed details for half an hour longer; and an hour after that, Katie was in bed in her apartment, and her father sat beside her in the dim room silently holding her hand. She did not sleep, but lay awaiting the light and her supreme endeavor, and through her brain flashed questions and faces: the handsome face of Peter Romain, leering at her in malicious triumph; the stern, proud face of Mr. Gordon, regarding her with haughty disapproval; and she wondered how Billy would receive her, and how she would get through her scene with him; and how, if that scene went well, she would ever, all sickness within, maintain for a year her public and lying rôle of a care-free, happy, beloved, all-envied wife.

CHAPTER XXX

THE task of locating Billy and making an appointment was undertaken by Lily, since it seemed certain he would refuse any request or overture made by Katie or in her name. That Sunday morning Lily spent at the telephone, trying for Billy at the bachelor's apartment he had occupied since his marriage, at the Gordon town house, at his various clubs. His man answered that he had not been in his apartment the previous night; the Gordon butler replied that Billy had called that morning and had asked to see his father, but had left with that wish ungranted; his clubs had seen nothing of him. Every quarter-hour Lily called up these places in rotation, only to receive the same news.

Morning grew into afternoon and Katie's suspense mounted with the passing hours. Madame Ravenal called, then Morris Blum, and both offered their services; but there was nothing they could do except wait and share the suspense. Early in the afternoon there began to be telephone calls from newspapers, and reporters rang the apartment door. The inquiries, politely made, were all to the same effect: a rumor was afloat that everything was not well with the marriage of Miss O'Doone and Mr. Gordon — did Miss O'Doone care to make a statement?

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

The venom of Peter Romain was getting in its work. There now remained no doubt of the destruction the morrow would bring unless that story were stopped.

Lily kept frantically at her telephoning. Toward three o'clock she caught Billy at his apartment, and after some urging he consented to see her for a few minutes if she would come at once. Katie, who had been sitting for hours with her hat on, had come to her feet at the first sound of his voice over the wire and now barely waited for Lily's repetition of the message.

'Something queer about him, Katie,' Lily ended. 'His voice sounded strange, and he didn't want to see me at all. You're not going to have an easy time.'

'I was not expecting one. Come, Father.'

Madame Ravenal, Lily, and Morris wished her luck; they were all going to remain in the apartment, awaiting her return or her message. Clutching her father's arm, Katie descended to the taxicab that had been standing at the curb since nine o'clock, ready to speed in any direction. No word was spoken between Katie and her father as they moved away; they were hand in hand, as they had been almost constantly for the last dozen hours. Katie had the sense that Peter Romain was ever keeping pace just behind her, leering over her shoulder; her present attempt took on the aspect for her of a desperate race between herself and Peter, with destruction or its avoidance as the stakes.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

In tense silence she rang the door of Billy's apartment. To his man she gave Lily's card; she was profiting by the device by which Peter Romain had gained admittance to her dressing-room the previous night.

'Please don't tell Mr. Gordon it's not Miss Spencer calling,' she begged.

The servant promised, showed her and her father into a small reception-room, and disappeared. By Katie's heart a long half-hour passed, by her watch perhaps a half-minute; then the servant reappeared and ushered her to a shadowed open door. She stepped through it into the living-room. Billy, who had risen from a writing-desk, moved forward to greet her, but paused sharply as she came out of the shadow.

'You here!' he exclaimed, staring; and then sharply: 'But the card is Lily's, and it was Lily who called up!'

'For — forgive the trick,' she stammered. 'But I was sure you wouldn't see me if I used my own name.'

He continued to stare, but did not speak. His appearance momentarily paralyzed her speech. His face had the haggard look that told of a night's struggle with agony, and his eyes were wild and bright with desperate resolve. On the table was a whiskey bottle, two thirds empty. That bottle frightened Katie, for Billy was not accustomed to drink — and then, from her long living with the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

nightmare drink had been to her, few things in the world could so terrify her as the association of liquor with those she loved.

Now that she was here, his stern, haggard face with its feverish eyes forbiddingly upon her, she hardly knew how or where to begin. 'Billy,' she whispered, 'Billy — I've come because there's a story — a terrible story —'

'The story that's to be in the papers, you mean,' he interrupted. 'I know about that. The papers have called me up. I know just the kind of sweet story it's going to be.'

'Then you know — it means ruin — for every one. That story must be stopped. There's just one way to stop it, Billy — and I've come — to stop it — if you're willing —'

'You should have stopped it before you began it!' he scathingly cut her off. The gentleness, the restraint of the night before were gone; and the bitter, burning words which had not then come, now poured molten from him. 'That was the only time to have stopped it — before you tricked me with your scheming marriage! But you didn't see how you yourself were going to be involved in the scandal, as well as I. And now that you see you also are going to be hurt by publicity, you come to me wanting the story stopped! God, I thought you had nerve enough to stand at least that much — especially since you got the big thing you went after, my money!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

She thrust toward him the deed he had given her on the day of their marriage. 'There is your money back again! I've not used it! I never intended to — not for myself!'

'You say that because you're afraid to use it now!' He put his hands behind his back. 'Keep it! It's your price, and I've paid you your price! It's been worth that to find out the truth about you!'

She laid the paper upon the desk.

'Take that back!' he ordered harshly. 'It's your price, and your price belongs to you!'

She slowly shook her head.

'Take it! I'll never touch that paper, or any of the money it represents! Do you think I could touch money that can only represent to me the soul of the woman I married? Take it, I say!'

She perceived that she would get no further with him while she sought to press the matter of the deed, so she silently resumed possession of it.

'Billy, I have a plan to stop that story — stop all its terrible results. Please hear me out—'

'I'll not hear you out! I'd not believe a thing you said! See what listening to you and believing in you has brought on! I believed you loved me and loved me for myself, and in consequence I'm suffering more pain and shame than I believed were in the world! And my father —'

'Oh, Billy, you must listen —'

'I've listened to you for the last time!' his words poured on in their mad torrent. 'It's your turn to

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

listen! My father warned me in advance of the sort you were at heart. He and I were the greatest of friends; I admired and loved him above all other men. I did not believe what he said about you, and I married you, and he has not since spoken to me. I have not yet told you the truth as to why I am living here. I am here because my father has broken with me absolutely, has given orders that I am not to live at home. I went back home this morning to confess to him that he had been right about you, but he refused to see me. This has been one of the finest items of your magnificent achievement — the absolute break between my father and me, two men who loved each other! The only way I can reach my own father is by a letter, a letter he may even refuse to read; but by this letter I'm now writing he'll know that at the last I knew what a fool I was and how right he'd been!

'Billy — please —'

'Be still!' he drove on at her. 'That's what listening to you has cost me. It has not only destroyed a great love I was fool enough to believe in; it has also destroyed the very idea of a woman's love! It has destroyed my father's love and all my relationship with him! It has cost me my self-respect, and the respect of every one else! It has cost me my friends, any place I might have hoped for, it has even cost —'

'I know, Billy — I know! But you need not lose all that! Listen —'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'It has even cost me my country! Within a few hours I'll be out of the city, and a day or so later I'll be out of the States. After that—'

'Billy, you're not really going!' she cried in further dismay.

'Of course I am! My bags are packed right now. Thank God, I've got a little education as an engineer. I can get a job, paying me enough to live on, at bridge or railroad construction work — in South America, China, Africa!'

'South America, China, Africa — Billy, you're not going there?'

'Why not? Why should I stay here? There's absolutely nothing for me here except the laughter of most people and perhaps the pity of a few. I don't care to spend the rest of my days in living that down! There's only one person I regret leaving: my father — and leaving him without a word!'

'Billy, where are you really going?'

'I'm not telling! Except that it will be out of America, and where no one I know will ever see me again. And as I don't want to be jeered at all over the world by strangers, of course I'll change my name — the name that's become just a symbol for the man who was tricked by a woman! From the hour I leave I'll not be heard of again — there'll be no way of tracing me — Billy Gordon will cease to exist!'

There could be no doubt of his desperate determination to do exactly as he had said. As Katie realized the extent of this new catastrophe to be

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

added to the sum of the other catastrophes, she clutched his arm and cried frantically:

'Billy, you must not — you must not! It's not necessary! Please, you must listen —'

He jerked away from her. 'I told you I would never listen to you again! And as I have no more for you to listen to, I wish you good-afternoon!'

'But, Billy, please —'

'Not another word! You've acted your last scene with me! Are you going, or are you going to compel me to go?'

'Please, Billy —'

'Good-afternoon!'

He wheeled sharply and walked toward a door at the rear. As he stepped through, she called faintly:

'Stay — I'll go.'

He glanced back and stood waiting. She regarded him a moment with a hopeless look of utter defeat, then slowly turned and silently went out and into the little room where her father waited. He sprang up eagerly as she entered.

'How did it come out?'

'In the worst possible way. Billy wouldn't even listen to me.'

'I'll make him listen to me!'

Terry O'Doone started out. She stopped him with an outstretched hand.

'It's no use trying, Father. He'll not listen to any one. If you were to insist on talking, he'd walk out just as he did with me.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Then what are we to do?'

'Nothing. There's nothing we can do. The very worst is going to happen. And it's worse even than we thought.' She told of Billy's plan to leave the country and lose himself. 'Let's go,' she ended dully, taking her father's arm.

They rode away, Katie's two hands again held by her father. There was no speech; there remained nothing to be said. In Katie there was the vast ache of impotence and despair over a world that is irretrievably lost, and a sense of personal guilt for that loss. Never before had the fighting spirit in Katie O'Doone been so low as in this black hour.

Mechanically her mind went over and over her farewell scene with Billy; his bitter phrases kept repeating themselves. One sentence insisted on thrusting itself into the most forward place in her attention: 'There's only one person I regret leaving: my father — and leaving him without a word!' For a time the insistence of the sentence had no especial meaning for her; then its possibilities flashed upon her and instantly she was leaning forward and pounding wildly upon the taxicab window. The car grated to a stop.

'Driver, Park Avenue near Seventieth Street,' Katie called excitedly and gave a number. 'And hurry — hurry!'

'What is it now, Katie?' her father asked as the car swung about.

'I'm going to try to see Mr. Gordon!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Mr. Gordon? Billy's father?'

'Yes — yes!'

'See Mr. Gordon?' her father marveled. 'You're not afraid to go to him? The man you said was so hard and proud — the man who tried to buy you off, who broke with his only son because of you? You're not afraid?'

'I don't dare be afraid!' she cried. 'He's the only person who can now possibly save things, for he's the only person that Billy will listen to! Oh, if he will only see me!'

'But will he be in town this time of year?'

'I'm hoping so. Billy told me his father was keeping the town house open because of the pressure of some very important affairs. He couldn't spare the time to go back and forth to their Long Island place.'

Katie tried to order her nerves for her hoped-for interview with the proud man who, since the very beginning of her acquaintance with Billy, had been in her proud mind an insurmountable barrier even to thoughts of any possible happy love between Billy and herself; who had told her to her face how unfitted a child of Cherry Lane was to fill the rôle of his daughter-in-law, and who had told her precisely what was required in the way of good family and good name of the young woman who was to enter his house as his son's wife and who was there to succeed to the high place once held by Billy's dead mother; the man whom by her marriage she had

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

outraged as he had never been outraged before. That was the man she had to face, whom she had to move by her appeal!

The car came to a stop before a vast house whose stone frontage extended along half a block. Katie crossed and rang the bell and stood waiting, a tremulous suppliant, within the house's portals: the house whose daughter-in-law she was in fact, whose daughter-in-law she had been pronounced unworthy to be — the house that until a few minutes since she had never dreamed to enter.

CHAPTER XXXI

BUT Katie was not the only one, nor the first, to have the thought of approaching Mr. Gordon.

Peter Romain, wholly dominated by his desire to inflict as great a hurt as possible upon Billy and Katie, realized the value to his vengeance of swiftly alienating from them every possible support. Therefore, one of his foremost aims was to widen the breach between Billy and his father, and perhaps make it permanent; to attain that end his surest method was to have his version of the previous night's exposure be the first that Mr. Gordon should hear, and by such priority to establish prejudice against and perhaps block the way of any other version or explanation.

In this subtle work of spreading bad news in high places, the acute Peter promptly adjudged that Madelaine Forsythe might prove his most willing and useful ally; he might be attacked on the ground of libel if he went too far, but Madelaine's social position and the mere fact that she was a woman would protect her no matter how extreme she might be. Further, he knew that Billy had ended his engagement to her on the very day before his marriage to Katie, and he knew exactly how the self-worshipping Madelaine had reacted to what she regarded

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

as an unparalleled humiliation — the rejection of Madelaine Forsythe in favor of a girl of the tenements.

He called upon Madelaine during the course of Sunday morning and told his story. He had not been mistaken in her reception of it; she gloated over Billy's shattered romance, and the exposure of Katie as a heartless gold-digger; and she at once fell in with Peter's plan that they carry the news to Mr. Gordon. Their purpose in bringing the story, as presented to Mr. Gordon, would be the friendly one of warning him of spreading rumors in order that he might be prepared to defend himself and his family against scandal.

Thus it was that half an hour before Katie came to the Gordon door, the two were received by Mr. Gordon in his study off the library. Peter he knew as Billy's intimate friend, and he knew that Madelaine had almost been his daughter-in-law, and there had been a time when he had been willing that she should be such; so his reception of them, though it had the stiffness natural in one who has just suffered a great public blow to his pride and is freshly reminded of it, was politely reassuring. Madelaine gave the artfully prepared motives that had brought them here — they both so wanted to serve Billy, and Mr. Gordon too! — and then launched into her artful tale.

It developed at once that Mr. Gordon had surmised that some new catastrophe had developed in

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

relation to the marriage, owing to the many vain attempts of newspapers to reach him within the last few hours.

He heard Madelaine out in silence, except for brief questions directed at her or Peter. Whatever may have been the effect upon him of this corroboration of his worst views of Katie, and of the further disgrace that was threatening the house of Gordon, his cold mask of a face, trained in the most exacting of all gambling games, showed never a change. And if he noted the light of vindictive triumph that had begun to gleam in Madelaine's eyes — if he read the selfishness and utter meanness of soul behind her handsome face, the hypocrisy behind her front of generous motives — if in any way he revised his former estimate of her — likewise of all these things his face gave no hint.

Madelaine had finished her narrative and was answering questions, when the butler entered with two cards upon a silver tray. Mr. Gordon examined these, considered for a long moment, then ordered: 'Show them into the library and ask them to wait for a few moments.' Still seemingly unmoved, he returned to his questioning.

Without, Katie and her father followed the butler over deep, soundless rugs into the library. Katie was all aquiver from the effort of trying to keep her faculties under control. Never upon the stage had she suffered such fear and such suspense; immediately before her was her life's climacteric scene, its

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

lines and business unknown to her, its outcome also unknown.

A few minutes the butler had said to wait. She glanced about the room, instinctively marking the essentials of the setting of her stage. The library, paneled in Circassian walnut, was of a stately length and height, with tall windows that gazed into an inner court which enclosed a small formal garden; upon its polished floors lay Bokhara rugs of soft dark hues, and around the room, above the bookshelves, hung a row of family portraits. One of these instantly caught the eyes of Katie: the same likeness she had seen in a locket Billy carried — the likeness of his dead mother.

Katie gazed fixedly at the face, she moved toward it, and a new tremor stole upon her. The portrait had been painted a year or two before Mrs. Gordon's death when she had been about thirty and in the fullness of her beauty. The face was smiling, vital, high-bred, fine in its every soft contour; it was instinct with the poise and serenity that come with maturity and with confidence in one's powers and position: a gracious face in which aristocracy and rare spirituality had their perfect blending — a face divinely proud, divinely humorous, divinely tender. And that lovely lady was dead.

Tears came into Katie's eyes, but her eyes held to the face. The substance of certain words came out of the past to her — words spoken to her by Mr. Gordon at their one never-to-be-forgotten meeting:

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

he had told her that he expected his daughter-in-law not only to be his son's wife, but to be fitted to enter this house and fill the place in it so long left empty by this rare soul who smiled down from the wall. Why, to fill that place — to fill that place —

'You wished to see me?' broke in a quiet voice.

Katie turned quickly. Mr. Gordon had noiselessly entered and was standing behind a flat-topped desk.

'I don't blame you for not wanting me!' burst from Katie, a sob in her voice. 'Of course I am not fit!'

'Pardon me — I do not exactly understand.'

'I was thinking of something you once said to me — about what you expected Billy's wife to be.' She pointed to the portrait. 'After her — after her — why, of course, I'd never do! And I don't blame you for thinking so — and — and hating me for everything!'

He gazed a silent moment at her working face, its great black Irish eyes aswim with tears. But his own expression did not alter.

'Was it to tell me this that you wished to see me?'

'No — no! Though I couldn't help saying it! And saying that I now think you were right! I came because —'

Her words lodged behind the dam of her suddenly constricted throat, and the while she tried to recover her forces she gazed at his handsome mask of a face with its cold, gray eyes that were so carefully

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

guarded against all expression. She was before her last hope, her final court — the man she had long regarded as a despot, bending all other wills to his desires, his preconceptions. In that first moment Katie felt much as might a bankrupt who desperately asks saving aid that he foreknows will be denied; and to her Mr. Gordon's was the formal look of the banker who coldly listens only to refuse.

Then the dam in Katie's throat gave way. She moved to his desk. She had entirely forgotten any preconceived plan, had entirely forgotten her pride — her words rushed straight from her heart to her lips.

'I came because of a terrible story that will be out to-morrow, and because of the ruin it will make. It's a story—'

'You may skip the story,' his precise voice broke in. 'I already know the story and its probable consequences.'

'But you don't know all its consequences! Not its worst consequences! Mr. Gordon, I'm not here to ask a single thing for myself! Whatever comes to me, I'll deserve and accept! I'm here solely to beg you to help your son! Please, please help your son!'

'Isn't helping my son your office now, rather than mine? He preferred you to me, you will recall. You, rather than I, should be regarded as responsible for any difficulty or danger he may be in.'

'You don't understand how desperately great that danger is! I can do nothing with him, sir! I went

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

to him with a plan that might save the situation, at least in part. But he would not listen to me, he would not even let me speak. He's all packed to leave the country — in a few hours he'll be gone — and we'll never hear of him again, never know how to reach him! A few more hours, and it'll be forever too late! That's why I've hurried straight from him to you, sir. You're the only person who can save him!'

'Why is it that I alone can save him?'

'Because you are the only person he will listen to! If you would only see him at once, make him listen to the plan he would not hear from me — I think that might save him! He tried to see you this morning — he's now writing you a good-bye letter — he'd listen to anything from you! Please, sir — please!'

'What is this plan he would not hear of from you?' pursued the frigid, formal voice of Mr. Gordon.

'It's a plan to stop the bad results by stopping the story. I think my part in that story is perhaps not so bad as you may think, but there's no time to try to say anything in my favor, and anyhow I don't count. Here is the idea of the plan: that Billy and I should at once, to-day, begin a show of living happily together exactly according to the original plan, exactly as if nothing had ever happened. Then there would be no story, and consequently no public bad results from the story.'

He was silent a long moment, the while his cold, gray eyes sought to probe the depths of her.

'As I understand you,' he said slowly, with no

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

touch of irony or feeling of any kind, 'you wish me to use my alleged influence with my son to get him to accept as a real marriage the same marriage that you yourself last night repudiated? That is, you request me to exert myself to have this marriage everywhere accepted and confirmed as a real marriage?'

'No, no! It only seems that I am asking that. I'm all to blame for this situation, of course — but we've got to start with the fact that this situation does exist and that we must find some quick way out of it. I've told you of the only way I know. If we accepted the marriage, it would all be pretense — pretense intended entirely for the public. Privately there would be no marriage. And in a year you could get rid of me by a separation. I'd make no fight, and I'll write any documents right now that you may think helpful in any legal course. For myself I ask no slightest thought, no slightest consideration — neither now, nor later. All I'm thinking of is how to save Billy, how to lessen the suffering from my mistakes!'

Again he was silent, and again his eyes searched her deeply for a long moment. She knew that controlled exterior was not the true man, for a man like that through and through could not love a son as she knew he loved Billy. But what was now going on beneath that surface she had no guess.

'Before I even consider presenting such a proposition to my son,' he at length said in his measured

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

voice, so like that of a banker announcing his terms and discussing security, 'I must know something more about yourself. On the face of it, a young woman who is said to have tricked a young man into marriage in order to gain control of his money, and who is said then to have repudiated that marriage — such a young woman is not the ideal sort to trust with a main part in an elaborate pretense of marriage such as you suggest.'

'I've told you that my part in the marriage is not really as bad as it seems — not as bad as I've admitted it to be!'

'Then I must ask you to tell me in detail just what you now claim that your part was.'

'But there's no time to go into all that!' she cried desperately. 'Besides, I do not care what is thought of me! And it can make no difference what is thought of me!'

'It makes a great difference to me,' he corrected. 'I can see some faint possibilities in your suggested plan, but I shall not think of moving in the matter unless you first fully answer such questions as I may ask.'

'All right!' she yielded. 'But, please, sir — make your questions few and short! There must be quick action if Billy is to be stopped!'

'Here is my first question. I understand that you admitted that you married my son solely in order to get his money. If that was not your reason, why did you marry him?'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'To keep him from marrying some one else! He had several times asked me to marry him and I had refused him. I had never intended marrying him; I liked him, but all the thought I'd given to such a marriage was strongly against it. But a little over two weeks ago Lily Spencer told me he was secretly engaged to Madelaine Forsythe and was going to marry her in a day or two. As his wife I knew that Madelaine Forsythe would be his ruin in every way. I wanted to save him from Madelaine Forsythe and that ruin. The time was short, I had to act quickly. I saw only one possible way. That was to marry him myself. I see now I was very foolish — but that was my only reason for the marriage. And I never intended to hold him to that marriage or to live with him.'

He pondered this statement for a time. Then he went on with the relentless precision of a cross-examining attorney

'If that were your sole motive, if you did not marry him for his money, then why did you secure the transfer to yourself of all his fortune?'

'Don't you remember the other time you saw me you said that you would strip Billy of his entire fortune if you had the power? You said to me such an action might send him to work. Perhaps I was again hasty and foolish, but my reason was the one you yourself had in mind — I wanted to force Billy to go to work. I never wanted his money for myself!'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

‘Have you any proof of that beyond your word?’

She placed Billy's deed upon the desk behind which he stood. ‘There's the deed Billy gave me. I tried to return it to him this afternoon. He would not have it. I wish you to keep it; ever since I've had it I've been wondering what to do with it. Now I ask you, if I had really married Billy for his money, would I not have tried to turn that deed into money long ago? Billy was willing, he would have helped me. Would I have held on to it until after my exposure and have run the risk of Billy's fighting my every effort at collection? I have not had a penny, I have not tried to get a penny! I have acted foolishly, yes—but I ask you if I have acted like a clever woman whose only thought was money?’

He did not answer her. Again there was a long pause.

‘If these statements are true, Miss O'Doone, then why did you declare the exact opposite to my son last night?’

‘Haven't I already told you that I had never intended marrying Billy—and, having married him, never intended to live with him? But I had acted on impulse, I had only seen what I thought had to be done—I had had no time to try to think of a way out. My putting off the honeymoon was just to gain time to think. But I could find no way out. Then last night came, and my last hour. Last night Peter Romain came into my dressing-room and tried to blackmail me. He claimed he had

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

thrown his friend Billy into my hands, and demanded a large part of Billy's fortune for his share in the alleged scheme. I refused him, and he went into a vengeful rage. He said I was double-crossing him, and that he was going to smash me and smash Billy. Then Billy —'

'One moment. You are certain Peter Romain did that?'

'He did exactly that. He had suggested just such a blackmailing scheme months before. Then Billy came into the dressing-room, and Peter Romain made up and told his gold-digger story, giving a gold-digger's motives to all I had done. With the honeymoon immediately ahead, I was desperate for a way out, and Peter's story suddenly appeared to me as a possible explanation and solution of everything. If Billy saw me in that light, he'd want no honeymoon with me, he'd not want me at all, and the shock might help rouse the real man in him. I was wrong; I'm just telling you how I thought. So I admitted that Peter Romain's accusations were true. I did not think a moment ahead, and I never foresaw the terrible results of my story on others. There — I've explained why I lied last night — I've told you everything! And now, please — please won't you hurry to Billy!'

'You have not told quite everything. When you saw the consequences, then what?'

'I was not the first to see them. They were pointed out to me, as was also this present plan.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

When I saw things, I agreed to see Billy as soon as possible. I went to him to try to tell him the plan. But he would not listen to a word, and he was packing to go forever. So I hurried here to you.'

'But from the very beginning, Miss O'Doone — that is, if your present statements are true — you must have foreseen some unpleasant results to yourself?'

'Yes, yes, of course! I didn't mind them then, for I thought Billy was going to be helped. And I wouldn't much mind what has happened to me now, if only Billy and others were not involved!'

'You said you liked my son, but never intended to marry him. Was that intention due to the fact that you did not like him well enough?'

'No! Billy was not a worker, and I grew up with the idea that I'd never marry a man who did not work. Then, sir, I knew the great ideas you had concerning Billy's marriage; you were always a barrier to any thoughts I might have had. I was as proud as you were proud, and I was not going to thrust myself into any family where I'd not be welcomed by every one as an equal.'

'Then I gather, if I have understood you correctly, that you would never have married my son had you not considered him in great danger, and had you not had your mad impulse to save him?'

'Of course not! Never!'

'And I also gather from your statements that you would not now be willing to live with him, on the

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

basis of a make-believe wife, were it not for all the additional trouble that has been created by your marriage?’

‘Yes, yes! But for all those things you would not now see me here!’

‘And you wish me to believe, Miss O’Doone, that your high regard for the welfare of my son, that regard and nothing else, has prompted you to do all these things, and has made you willing to forfeit your own popularity, your good repute, and to become a figure of public shame? You wish me to believe all that?’

‘It is the truth, sir. Though of course I did not see that all these things were going to happen.’

‘Miss O’Doone, you love my son?’

‘Of course I do! Though not till last night did I know that I loved him so much!’

There was another long silence, during which his cold eyes were on her like twin microscopes.

‘Please, sir, won’t you get through!’ begged Katie.

‘I’m quite through, Miss O’Doone. Your story has one outstanding flaw: it seems altogether too extravagantly good a story for you to expect to have it believed.’

‘I am not asking you to believe it! I am not asking you for one single thing for myself! With me do as you like! I am only asking something for your son! Please — please — won’t you see him!’

Terry O’Doone had moved forward to Katie’s side

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

on Mr. Gordon's verdict upon her story, and he now spoke for the first time.

'Pardon me, sir. You mean that what my daughter has told you seems more than any woman would ever do for a man, however much she might love him?'

'Perhaps that is my meaning.'

'Then, sir, you do not know my Katie, and you do not know how my Katie loves,' he said in his rich voice, resonant with controlled emotion. 'I speak not as her father, but as an example of how wise, resourceful, even high-handed and utterly selfless her love can be. In my youth I thought of being a priest, but I was weak and fell by the wayside. When my daughter came upon me four years ago, I was a drunken cabaret singer. She recognized me, but I did not know her, for I believed that my daughter had been dead for years. She picked me up from where I was —'

'Father, why bother going into that?'

'It's my duty to my daughter, Katie. Mr. Gordon, she joined me in my work and took the name of my dead daughter. I believed that she was just a sham. She kept up that pretense because she feared, if I knew her to be my real daughter, she would have no influence with me — and all the while she was pretending to be my stage daughter, sir, she was daily choking down her real daughter's love for me. She raised me to a better level of work, and into better living conditions; she tried to cure me of

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

drink. I patronized her, thinking my professional improvement was due to recognition of my merit; she let me enjoy that conceit, and kept on hiding the truth. She had judged me right, for when six months ago I learned by accident that she was my blood daughter, I lost all control and plunged to the very bottom with drink. Her love drove her to instant action. She carried me off, unconscious, to a sanitarium; and she kept me there, partly by trickery, partly by persuasion, until I was cured. All these years my daughter was determined that I should be a man; and to whatever extent I am today a man, it is due to my daughter's love — a love so vital and valiant that it dares do anything — a love so instinctively and passionately centered on the interests of those she loves that she had only after-thoughts for herself!

'Father, that's too much! And even if it were all true, there's no time for it now — it has nothing to do with this situation!'

'He asked questions, Katie, then doubted your answers. I could not keep still, I had to try to make him see you as you are!'

'It doesn't matter how he sees me!'

She looked quickly around at Mr. Gordon and her arms reached out to him in passionate appeal. Her great black eyes were again flowing tears, as when she had turned from the portrait of the lovely lady.

'Think of me as you like!' she cried sobbingly, all of her heart surging upward into this the climax

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

of her supplication. 'I do not count! But please see your son! And at once — too much time's already been wasted! Make him listen to my plan, or any better plan if you can think of one. I'll go through with my part. And when I'm through acting it, do with me just as you will. I make no condition. I'll make separation as easy as it can be. But please see your son! At once! Please! Please! Please!'

So intent was Katie, so utterly forgetful of self, that she had no idea that at that moment she made such a figure as she had not been in all her life. Never had she been more a creature of the heart — a heart abetted by a rare mind, by a consuming love of right. And all the rare grace of her, all her rare beauty, were at their unconscious highest, and even so they were but the symbol of a yet rarer soul. So unselfishly intent had she been that she had never guessed that Mr. Gordon's cold, persistent questioning had been as a sculptor's chisel that cuts away encumbering marble and reveals the figure of unconscious divinity. All the dross of her was gone. She was the embodied spirit of valiant, idealistic, all-surmounting youth; she was youth magnificent.

And so selflessly engrossed was she that it had no significance for her when Mr. Gordon turned his eyes from her face to that lovely, spirited, spiritual face of paint and canvas on the wall — gazed at it for a time — and then turned his eyes back upon the face of Katie.

'Please — oh, please — please,' she whispered.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

‘Please — please —’ She choked, and could say no more.

Mr. Gordon coughed slightly. ‘I wish to think over your plan,’ he remarked. ‘While I think it may be more pleasant for you and your father to wait in the garden.’

He led the way to a pair of French windows and stood aside. As Katie stepped out into the court, her figure drooped with the sudden outgoing of her hope. She knew that she had lost.

CHAPTER XXXII

THAT quiet little garden, on land as valuable as if surfaced with minted gold, had been fashioned for the lady of the portrait and with her had been a favorite retreat for meditation or play with her only son. But Katie hardly noted the thick ivy trained against the high brick walls, the beds of tall, luxuriant daisies — every week the garden was refilled with fresh varieties of wild-flowers, grown in greenhouse or forcing-bed — or the naiad who leaned above the marble-brimmed pool of crystal water and forever smiled down with arch approval upon her reflected self. Katie sat on a marble bench, her energy spent, her hope gone, no word even for her father beside her, and waited in dull, all-pervading pain. That was all that was now left for her to do — just wait.

She had been sitting amid this reposeful beauty for perhaps a half-hour, perhaps two hours, she did not know how long, when Mr. Gordon appeared in the French window and signaled her to enter alone. She passively obeyed and took the chair he indicated. He sat down behind the flat-topped desk. His face told her no more than it had during the preceding interview.

‘I have carefully thought over your plan,’ he said. ‘I find that it is a plan I cannot approve my-

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

self, nor can I recommend it for the approval of my son.'

'I expected that you would not,' Katie dully murmured.

'Considering the circumstances — considering all the circumstances — I feel that your plan is based upon altogether too much of deception. It is because of this deception that I cannot approve of the plan.'

'I am sorry — sorry for Billy's sake.' She stood up. 'Anyhow, I thank you for listening to me. I'll call my father and be going. Good-bye, sir.'

'A few minutes, please, if you can spare them.'

'Certainly, sir.' She reseated herself.

'Though I cannot approve your plan, I'd like to have a record of your proposal. More particularly that part which was given in answer to my questions. I hope you do not mind repeating yourself.'

'Certainly not, sir.'

He opened a door of a cabinet in the desk. 'The dictaphone I have installed is not very delicately adjusted, so I am going to ask you to speak as clearly as you can. Are you ready for my questions?'

'Quite ready, sir.'

He began with his questions. In Katie's replies her voice was wearily mechanical, it had nothing of the imploring passion with which she had previously poured out these same statements, but she conscientiously kept it clear for the benefit of the unseen instrument that was listening. Thus one by one she retold her motives, which gave such a different

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

aspect to the marriage, to the affair of the deed, to the postponed honeymoon, to the entire business of the night before — which showed each act, however mad, to have been prompted by thought of Billy's welfare, by a great unselfish love. And she repeated her plan to save the present situation — to act her part for a year in a make-believe happy marriage, then to vanish.

'I believe that is all,' Mr. Gordon said presently.

She rose wearily. 'Then, sir, I'll be going —'

He had also risen. 'Not just yet, please.' Then his voice suddenly rang out. 'Come in — come in! Now will you believe what I told you!'

Katie turned in the direction Mr. Gordon had suddenly faced. A door that all this while had stood ajar now opened and Billy Gordon stepped into the room. He was very white, and the eyes he held on Katie were staringly wide with astoundment. Katie gazed back at him in a surprise yet greater; her lips fell apart, but no words came from them.

'Katie,' sounded Billy's thin, marveling whisper, 'Katie — to think that you — that you —' The whisper died out.

Katie could not produce even a whisper. In her bewilderment she looked around at Mr. Gordon.

'I sent for Billy,' he explained. 'You said he'd listen to me, so I talked to him and made him listen to you. There's no machine in this desk. He's the listening machine you've just been telling everything to.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

She gazed back at Billy. He slowly moved across to her.

'Katie,' came out his awed whisper, 'Katie — you did all that — all that — for me?'

Her voice returned, a mere faint breath. 'Why — why — yes, Billy.'

His awed whisper was slow with a yet greater wonderment. 'And — and, after all — you really do — do love me?'

'Yes, Billy.'

The surpassing marvel of this almost unbelievable thing would let him say no more. He looked at her with the dazzled eyes of a despairing one who, without warning, sees the gates of his lost paradise re-opening to him.

Katie's stupor of amazement suddenly departed. The menace of the still unsettled situation, the need for swift action, her plan, all flashed imperatively upon her.

'Billy,' she cried, 'you heard my plan for stopping that story?'

'By pretending a happy marriage? Yes.'

'Will you do that with me, Billy?' she went on breathlessly. 'We must decide at once, there's not a minute to be wasted! I promise to act my part, to go through with everything just the same —'

'One moment!' It was Mr. Gordon who spoke; he had come from behind his desk and was approaching. 'I told you I could not approve that plan.'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'But it is the only plan!' Katie cried desperately.

'It is not the only plan!' he replied authoritatively. 'Since I do not approve of it, it becomes exactly no plan at all!'

'But — but the plan doesn't need your approval, not if Billy —' She turned swiftly from the father. 'Billy, you'll go through it with me?'

'Yes, Katie, if you think —'

'Keep out of this, son! You've made a mess of things — particularly this affair. You let me handle this.' And to Katie, in his tone of driving finality: 'Your plan is eliminated. But there is another plan: a better and safer plan. And it is the only plan.'

'Another plan? A better plan? Why — why — what is that?'

He answered with the cold, masterful manner of one accustomed to swift decision, to the domination of others.

'Instead of a pretended marriage, a real marriage.'

'A real marriage? A real marriage? I — I don't understand you!'

'I mean exactly what I said: that I will stand for no deception. A real marriage is the only solution that I will accept, therefore a real marriage is the only way out.'

Katie stared at him blankly. There was no doubt of it; he was drivingly in earnest.

'A real marriage?' she stammered. 'But — but you don't like me — you don't want me —'

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'No time for arguing details just now,' he interrupted. 'The crisis is too pressing. We must act. It's the only way. Billy, to save the situation, are you willing that the marriage should be a real marriage?'

'Of course! That's what from the beginning I thought it was!'

'Now you, Katie — to save the situation, to prevent the consequences of your acts, are you willing that the marriage should be a real marriage?'

'But I always thought that you —'

'I've just said there's no time for secondary matters!' he drove at her. 'There's just time for a yes or no. Are you willing that the marriage should be a real marriage — willing to begin living with my son as his real wife and to keep on living with him? There is no other way. You said you loved my son. You said you would do anything to save the situation. Now will you do this?'

She was caught. She hesitated only a moment.

'Since there is no other way — yes.'

'And you will keep your word, under any and all circumstances?'

'Yes — yes!' she cried.

He drew a sharp breath, his cold, driving, dominant face suddenly softened into an amazing smile, and when he next spoke his cold, driving, dominant voice had undergone a change as amazingly great — it was warm, vibrant, emotional.

'Forgive me, my dear,' the voice trembled

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

happily, 'forgive me for bullying you and stampeding you into saying "yes" and making you swear to it.'

Once again Katie was utterly bewildered. 'Why — why — I forgive you —'

'You see,' he explained, 'for the last two hours, ever since I sent you into the garden, my one great thought has been about how I could get you to say yes — get you to be a real wife and a real daughter-in-law. You had said you had never intended to marry into my family. You had said that only this trouble made you now willing to be the pretended wife. It was a difficult problem, and I saw only one chance of making sure of you: that was to take your own idea, slightly alter it, and drive you into being the reality.'

Katie still could not grasp all that was implied by his words. 'But — but — when I first spoke to you, you didn't believe me, and — and —'

'But I was believing you, my dear, before you were halfway through! I never did anything so hard in my life as not showing my belief. I was afraid, if I showed you, you might not go on — and I was afraid the idea that was forming might be spoiled.'

'You mean — you mean that you want me?'

'I mean just that, and I mean it with all my heart! I mean that I, in having you for a daughter-in-law, and that my son, in having you for a wife, are the two luckiest men on earth!'

'But I thought you didn't like me!' she cried. 'I

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

thought that you thought I was not the sort —'

'I thought that until you came to me two hours ago. Before that I did not know you. But since the revelation you then made of yourself — For two hours, Katie, you have been to me in every way the finest young woman I have ever known! You are just the young woman I have been dreaming of all these years as a daughter-in-law — just the young woman I've been hoping would come into this house and be its mistress!'

For a moment Katie could only gaze at him. Then, obeying the behest of a new reverence that had so recently been born within her, she turned and gazed up at the portrait of Mrs. Gordon.

'I'm not fit,' she breathed. 'No, I'm not fit.'

He knew all that was passing in her mind. 'Oh, but you are,' he said gently — and Katie had never dreamed his voice could be so gentle. 'I know that she wants you, too. Don't you see how she smiles at you and asks to be your mother? And she hopes you'll come, we all hope you'll come, not because I just now made you promise, but that you'll come because you yourself want to come.'

Billy had felt that all this scene had belonged to his father; that if Katie were truly to be won, his father, so long known by her to be her enemy, had first to be her suitor and had first to win her. But Billy now spoke up for himself.

'Katie, can't you come because you want to come?' And then, with fervent determination in

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

his choking voice: 'I can't say much in favor of myself, Katie — but after hearing all you have done for me, all that you've been willing to sacrifice and suffer for my sake, I'm most certainly wakened up! I'm going to work as hard as ever you've wanted me to work! And if there is a man in me, Katie, I'm going to be that man!'

It was only a promise, but in his face Katie read its certain fulfillment. 'I haven't any doubt about you, Billy,' she returned tremulously. 'Not any more. But don't you see, both of you, that I'm not fit? I've been so very, very foolish — foolish in every act —'

'You foolish?' Mr. Gordon interrupted her. 'Folly is judged by its results. Listen to me, Katie. I've had time to consider your every act. If it had not been for your impulsive marriage of Billy — for the devices you felt you were driven to use — for your denial last night of your love for Billy and the situation it created — if it had not been for these, then you would not have come to me this afternoon, I never should have known you, and our present situation would never have come about. Our present situation and all its rich and happy possibilities are the direct development of your follies. Don't you see that, my dear?'

'Yes,' she admitted.

'Exactly. Only I do not call your acts follies. I call them the spontaneous deeds of a great, unselfish, and instinctively wise heart. Follow your heart, my

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

dear, and I think you'll never commit a folly. And if your heart says come to us, you'll not be bound by us in any way. You have too great and sure an energy for me to seek to direct it. You will be free to live your own life. On the stage — in this home — wherever you please. Now can't you come, my dear, not because you're driven by duty, not to prevent trouble, but because your heart wants to come?'

Appealed to thus, the hearts of her father-in-law and her husband shining in their eyes, Katie's heart sobbed happily through her lips:

'Of course I want to come! I love you both! Yes, I love all three of you! — I mean the picture, too. She — she is one of you. I see that. And, oh, I'm going to do my best to make all three of you happy. I'm not going to let any of you be sorry! Never! Never!'

Her father-in-law was the first to take her into his arms and kiss her.

'We're all so glad that at last you've come home!' he breathed huskily. 'We've been waiting for the right woman such a long, long time! I include my wife — she's been waiting, too. We're all going to be very proud of you — very, very proud!'

He released her and turned away to leave the room. Instantly she was close in Billy's arms and their lips clung together in dizzy happiness: the first kiss, of all the many Katie had given him, that was not a forced counterfeit of love.

'Oh, Katie,' he breathed presently, 'to think that

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

this is really true! I'm not worth it, and never shall be! But if loving you, and forever trying my hardest — if they will help —'

'They'll be all I'll want, Billy. We'll both try; both help each other. I'm going to need such a lot of help, dear; for I don't know this world as your mother did, and I'm so terribly afraid. For me to try to take up where your wonderful mother left off —'

'There's nothing you need ever fear!'

'Oh, but there is! I've lived half my life in a single tenement room — and now to have charge of a house like this — to please you and your father and your friends — to follow after such a woman as your mother! I'm not trained, Billy, I don't know how!'

'There's not a thing in all the world, Katie, that you can't do!' And he gathered her again into his arms.

That embrace of the lovers was a brief one, for then began the congratulations. First, there came Terry O'Doone, who had been summoned from the little garden by Mr. Gordon and given an outline of what had happened. There were pride and reverence and also tears in his fine eyes as he took Katie in his arms and gave the two his blessing. Then there entered Madame Ravenal, Lily Spencer, and Morris Blum; Mr. Gordon had telephoned them at the time he had telephoned Billy, and they had been waiting for an hour in another room, and they, too, had just learned the news from Mr. Gordon. Madame Ravenal could not have been more tearfully

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

happy and proud if she had indeed been Katie's mother, nor Lily if she had indeed been Katie's sister, nor Morris if he had indeed been Katie's brother. Katie kissed them all, cried over them all. It was wonderful, in this the happiest moment of her life, to have about her these dearest of all her friends.

'Katie,' whispered Lily Spencer at the end of her embrace, 'you were a million per cent right in what you said about Peter Romain. I'm cured. Thanks. Say no more.'

Katie had no chance to say anything more. This general rejoicing was interrupted by the reëntrance of Mr. Gordon. He was smiling.

'I've had Mr. Romain waiting some two hours,' he announced. 'I've had a talk with him, and he'll not bother any of our lives again.'

'How did you ever manage that?' asked Katie.

'Do you think I'd find Peter Romain hard to manage after trying to manage you? He was very easy, my dear — particularly with the lights you'd given me on his character. He didn't seem particularly happy when I told him how happy you and Billy were. All the same, we have much to thank him for.'

Katie and Billy exchanged glances. Yes, as things had turned out, there was much indeed for which to thank the malice of Peter Romain.

'I have also been talking with reporters,' continued Mr. Gordon.

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

'Yes?' several anxiously cried out in unison.

'The papers to-morrow will announce,' replied Mr. Gordon, 'that the bride and groom are spending their honeymoon as guests of the groom's father. The father himself was authority for this and the further statement that every one concerned is extremely happy. Such is the very scandalous end of a very scandalous story.'

He smiled in happy triumph upon them all.

This time the congratulations were general. Presently Katie and Billy drew apart. On Katie, for all her happiness, had again come the sense of obligations incurred by her new life — the traveling of a path she did not know. Instinctively she again moved to the portrait of the lovely lady, and stood beneath it, her hand in Billy's. The others, suddenly silent, watched them, Mr. Gordon and Terry O'Doone standing side by side.

For a long space Katie gazed up at the lovely person who had become her exemplar, whose place she was to try to fill. Then her lips parted, and she tremulously whispered as in prayer:

'Mother, help me to do my best — please help me to do my best!'

And then, after another moment, a strange quiver went through her and her lips moved silently. Voicelessly she repeated:

'Mother, help me to do my best — please help me to do my best!'

But though her gaze was still addressed to that

THE HEART OF KATIE O'DOONE

loving mother who looked down from the wall, her soul's eyes and her silent prayer were addressing another mother — a mother whose loving last days had been lived in Cherry Lane.

There is nothing more to be told here of Katie: neither of what she did to the world, nor of what the world did to her. These scenes in the Gordon library took place only yesterday, and Katie's further career is all of the future. What she will do and what is to become of her in her new life, so strange to her, even she herself cannot know. For her future we have just one broad certainty: whatever she may try to do, whatever she may have to face, she will be ever inspired and guided by sincerity, courage, idealism, understanding, sympathy, ever-growing graciousness, by swift mind and ever-generous heart. For, changeless except as they change for the better, these are fixed elements of the mind and the heart of Katie O'Doone.

THE END

